

EMMY® AWARD WINNER MATTHEW RHYS IS

PERRY

MASON

EVERYONE IS GUILTY OF SOMETHING

SERIES PREMIERE
6/21 AT 9PM **HBO**®
AND STREAM IT ON **HBOMAX**

©2020 WarnerMedia Direct, LLC. All Rights Reserved. HBO Max and related service marks are the property of WarnerMedia Direct, LLC.

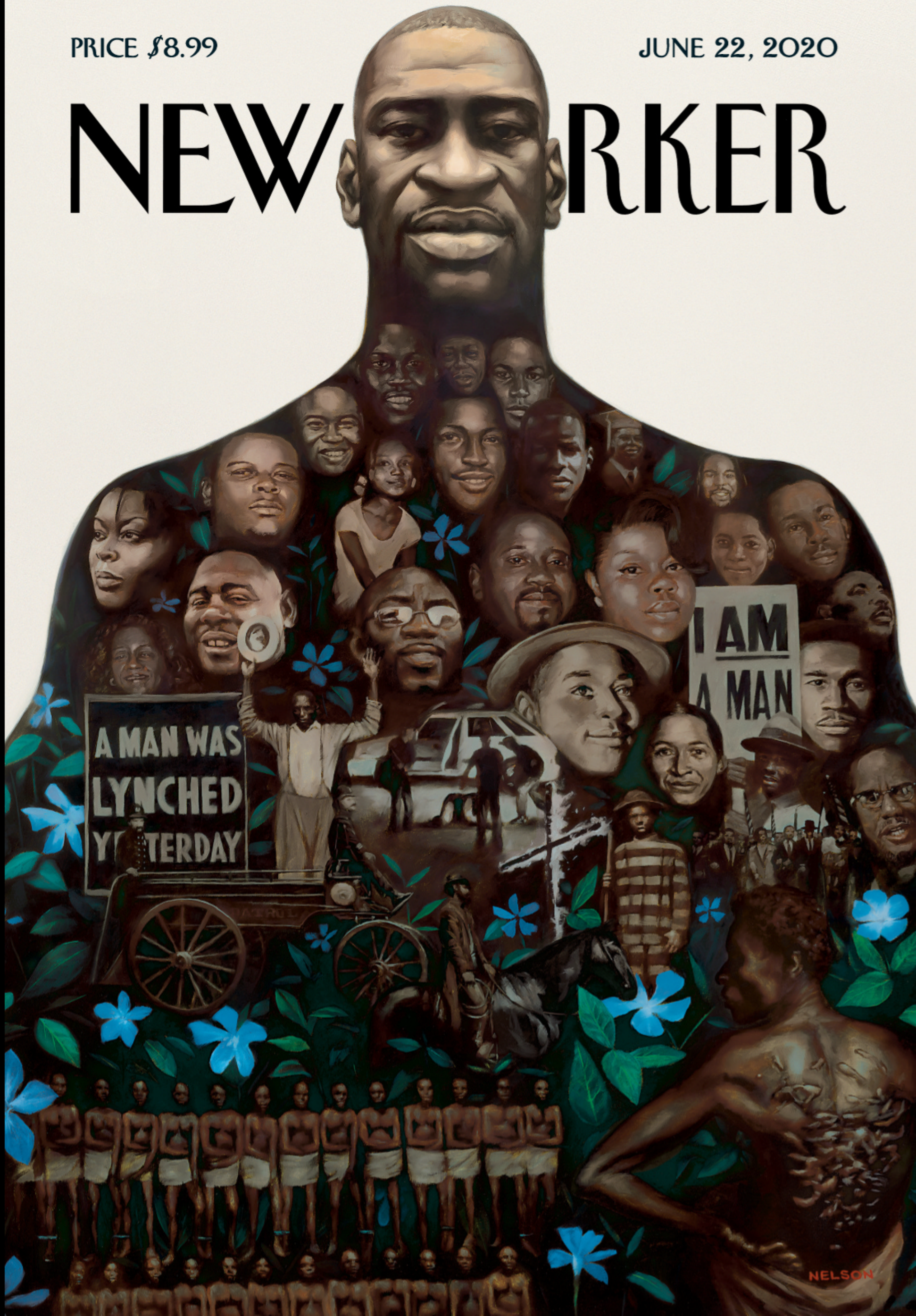
VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

PRICE \$8.99

JUNE 22, 2020

NEWARKER





NAACP

#WeAreDoneDying

TAKE ACTION NOW

Visit [NAACP.ORG](https://naacp.org)

    @NAACP

THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 22, 2020

4 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

15 THE TALK OF THE TOWN

*Jelani Cobb on what protests mean for America;
George Floyd's lawyer; public hearings, on Zoom;
Brooklyn postcard; marching as a black immigrant.*

PERSONAL HISTORY

Elizabeth Alexander 20 The Trayvon Generation
On childhood in the face of police brutality.

SHOUTS & MURMURS

Riane Kunc 23 Presidential Trolley Problems

AMERICAN CHRONICLES

Jill Lepore 24 The Riot Report
A long history of government inaction.

LETTER FROM MINNEAPOLIS

Luke Mogelson 30 The Uprising
How one city became the center of a movement.

PORTFOLIO

Isaac Scott 42 Whose Streets
Protesters join together in Philadelphia.
with David Remnick

A REPORTER AT LARGE

Rachel Aviv 56 Punishment by Pandemic
The chaos of the coronavirus in prison.

FICTION

Scholastique Mukasonga 66 "Grief"

SKETCHBOOK

Barry Blitt 71 "Home Hair Styling for Men"

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

Sarah Resnick 74 Brit Bennett's *"The Vanishing Half."*

Adam Gopnik 77 *A new history of Mengele's evil.*

81 Briefly Noted

A CRITIC AT LARGE

Paul Elie 82 *Reckoning with Flannery O'Connor's racism.*

DANCING

Jennifer Homans 86 *Choreography in a socially distant world.*

THE CURRENT CINEMA

Anthony Lane 88 *"Da 5 Bloods," "The King of Staten Island."*

POEMS

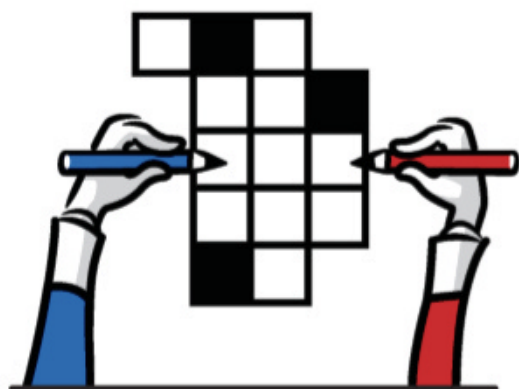
Marilyn Nelson 60 "Pigeon and Hawk"

Terrance Hayes 68 "George Floyd"

COVER

Kadir Nelson "Say Their Names"

The New Yorker Crossword: Introducing Partner Mode



You can now solve
our online crossword
puzzles with a friend
who's across the room
or halfway around
the world.

Start playing at
[newyorker.com/crossword](https://www.newyorker.com/crossword)

THE
NEW YORKER

CONTRIBUTORS

Elizabeth Alexander (*"The Trayvon Generation,"* p. 20) is a poet and the author of, most recently, the memoir *"The Light of the World."* She is the president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Kadir Nelson (*Cover*), an artist, won the 2020 Caldecott Medal for his illustrations for Kwame Alexander's book-length poem, *"The Undefeated."*

Rachel Aviv (*"Punishment by Pandemic,"* p. 56), a staff writer, was a 2019 national fellow at New America.

Ronald Wimberly (*Sketchpad,* p. 19) is the creator of the graphic novel *"Prince of Cats"* and the magazine *LAAB*.

Scholastique Mukasonga (*Fiction,* p. 66), a Rwandan writer who lives in France, will publish her fourth book in English, the story collection *"Igifu,"* in September.

Terrance Hayes (*Poem,* p. 68) is the author of *"American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin"* and *"To Float in the Space Between."*

Isaac Scott (*Portfolio,* p. 42) is a photographer and a ceramicist based in Philadelphia.

Jill Lepore (*"The Riot Report,"* p. 24), a professor of history at Harvard, will publish her latest book, *"If Then,"* in September.

Luke Mogelson (*"The Uprising,"* p. 30) has been contributing to *The New Yorker* since 2013. He is the author of the story collection *"These Heroic, Happy Dead."*

Marilyn Nelson (*Poem,* p. 60) has written books of poetry for adults, young adults, and children. *"Lubaya's Quiet Roar"* is forthcoming this fall.

Paul Elie (*A Critic at Large,* p. 82), the author of *"The Life You Save May Be Your Own,"* is a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs.

Jennifer Homans (*Dancing,* p. 86), the magazine's dance critic, directs the Center for Ballet and the Arts, at N.Y.U. She is the author of *"Apollo's Angels."*

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM



VIDEO DEPT.

A cousin of Eric Garner on what George Floyd's family can expect in the fight against police brutality.



U.S. JOURNAL

Can COVID-19 contact-tracing plans tackle the problems of reopening? Benjamin Wallace-Wells reports.

Download the *New Yorker Today* app for the latest news, commentary, criticism, and humor, plus this week's magazine and all issues back to 2008.

THE MAIL

LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

Ben Taub's account of Victor Vescovo's extraordinary mission to reach the five deeps of the world's oceans left me in awe ("Five Oceans, Five Deep," May 18th). I became concerned, however, about the implications that it may have for the future of private exploration. As one member of Vescovo's motley crew puts it, the group's accomplishment is akin to a "daily flight to the moon." But a key difference is that the quest to put a man on the moon was not only a collective enterprise in spirit; it was also overseen by a national government. Though Vescovo's willingness to collaborate with scientists is admirable, he admits that someone with a private submarine like his could become a "Bond villain," capable of disrupting markets for profit or of salvaging lost nuclear weaponry. In an age in which billionaires such as Elon Musk are becoming increasingly involved in science and exploration, one wonders whether it is wise to celebrate these types of conquests by the ultra-wealthy.

Andrew Wofford

Bryn Mawr, Penn.

Taub's fine story about Victor Vescovo reminds us that we still have much to learn about the world's oceans—and that it is single-minded (and often independently financed) entrepreneurs who lead the way down. As I describe in my book "Sealab," the U.S. Navy's program of that name, developed in the nineteen-sixties, was spearheaded by an iconoclastic medical officer, Captain George Bond, who cajoled skeptics into pursuing his space-age dream of equipping "aquonauts" to operate from under-sea versions of space stations. Sealab yielded scientific breakthroughs that would eventually enable divers to go a thousand feet or deeper—a depth that, these days, commercial divers generally reach only when they're working in offshore oil fields. Might it finally be time for a true "wet NASA?" Or should we continue to rely on enthusiasts like Vescovo to address John F.

Kennedy's observation that "knowledge of the oceans is more than a matter of curiosity. Our very survival may hinge upon it"? If only another President would set as ambitious a deadline for ocean exploration as J.F.K. did for a moon landing.

Ben Hellwarth

Santa Monica, Calif.

HELPING HANDS

We should all praise the organizations that Jia Tolentino mentions in her piece about mutual aid ("Can I Help You?" May 18th). However, readers should be careful not to look at these groups through rose-colored glasses, or to construct false dichotomies between mutual aid and charitable organizations. Not all charities are inflexible behemoths: around sixty per cent of the nearly one million charitable 501(c)3 organizations in the U.S. have an annual income of less than a hundred thousand dollars. As Tolentino notes, many mutual-aid organizations end up registering as nonprofit charities in order to provide legal protection to workers and volunteers, and to accept tax-deductible donations. It seems that Tolentino is writing just as much about mutual aid as she is about the "paradox of scale"—the idea that large organizations have more capacity to help but are more bureaucratic, whereas smaller organizations work more closely with communities but are relatively limited in their reach. Even so, mutual-aid organizations, nonprofits, and charities are all part of the vital non-governmental sector of citizens' initiatives.

John P. Casey

Center for Nonprofit Strategy and Management

Baruch College, CUNY

New York City

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

Created by the editors of
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST,
AD PRO is the members-only resource
for design industry professionals

ADPRO



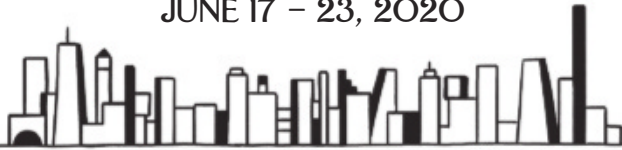
MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES

- .Exclusive, must-read industry and market news
- .Trend reports and the best new product sources
- .Effective tools and events to grow your business
- .Searchable AD archive spanning 100 years of magazine issues
- .More essential resources that only AD has access to

Join now and save 20% off
your annual membership
ARCHDIGEST.COM / JOINNOW

In an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus, New York City museums, galleries, theatres, music venues, and cinemas have closed. Here's a selection of culture to be found online and streaming.

JUNE 17 – 23, 2020



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



In 1990, **Felix Gonzalez-Torres**, one of America's most important and emotionally eloquent contemporary artists—who died of AIDS-related causes, in 1996, at the age of thirty-eight—made a simple but radical piece: a pile of fortune cookies, free for the taking, which was replenished when it was depleted. This meditation on the sweetness of life and the inevitability of loss is being re-created by some thousand people worldwide through July 5; images are online at the Web sites of the Andrea Rosen and David Zwirner galleries.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DOAN LY

MUSIC

Ambrose Akinmusire: “on the tender spot”

JAZZ The trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire insures that the joys and the anxieties of current African-American life stay at the forefront of his aesthetic through written statements and spoken-word collaborations. But he doesn't always need words. On his new album, “on the tender spot of every calloused moment,” the short, reflective track “reset (quiet victories & celebrated defeats)” speaks Akinmusire's heart and mind in the anguished intensity of his horn, recalling the great Booker Little, one of Akinmusire's stated influences. Some of the pieces with his storming quartet exhibit virtuosic dazzle, but the less frenetic performances reveal his gift for dramatic understatement: the final track, “Hooded procession (read the names out loud),” is a meditation, spare and searching, scored for his lone electric piano.—*Steve Futterman*

Built to Spill: “The Songs of Daniel Johnston”

ROCK For all the tales of wildness that made Daniel Johnston the king of outsider artists in the nineties, the music he created was graced with at least one trait of successful pop—he played bighearted songs that felt as though they had been beamed to stereos from more exotic environs. On “Built to Spill Plays the Songs of Daniel Johnston,” the late artist's coevals, inspired by their brief tenure backing him during a 2017 tour, revisit his songbook. Built to Spill's straightforward interpretations confront Johnston's work on its own terms, revelling in his comely melodies and emotional directness. Though the trio eschews the knotty guitar patterns for which it is celebrated, it deftly exploits what might prove to be the band's greater asset: the ability to project a sense of wonder with every note. The album's awe fits its muse.—*Jay Ruttenberg*

Coriky: “Coriky”

INDIE ROCK On Coriky's self-titled debut, you can occasionally hear the past lives of the band's three members, Ian MacKaye, Amy Farina, and Joe Lally. The record preserves some of the vocal interplay of the Evens, a duo that MacKaye and Farina formed in 2001, as well as the visceral spirit of MacKaye and Lally's legendary post-hardcore group, Fugazi. But Coriky's sound is more of a slow boil—one that captures the perniciousness of American apathy and the banality of empty outrage. The album interrogates complacency with an absurdist, almost Dadaist approach: a woman casually washes a dish after carrying out a drone strike; the prescription for endless violence is a cup of tea. On “Inauguration Day,” MacKaye lets out an agitated yowl, his voice hoarse from trying to wake people from their stupor.—*Julyssa Lopez*

Flatbush Zombies: “now, more than ever”

HIP-HOP Even at its most lysergic and untethered, the music of the Brooklyn rap trio Flat-

bush Zombies has always had a raw center, and it's that pained, pulsing core that drives the group's urgent new six-track E.P., “now, more than ever.” Meechy Darko, Zombie Juice, and Erick Arc Elliott dropped the project, along with a merchandise line, in early June, announcing that they would split every dollar of the proceeds among three organizations dedicated to black communities. From the smoke-filled vibe of “herb” to the Sophie Faith-assisted closer, “when i'm gone,” which features some of Elliott's sleekest production, the rappers weave around one another to illuminate experiences of black trauma and police brutality. On “quicksand,” Darko spits gruffly, “I know they say drugs kill, but so do cops, who cares?”—*J.L.*

“Love Saves the Day”

DISCO Published in 2005, the British historian Tim Lawrence's “Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-1979” remains the definitive accounting of New York's underground disco scene in the seventies. Now Lawrence has compiled a two-disk soundtrack that captures the utopic air of the parties depicted in the book, defined by loose-limbed grooves played by live, often eccentric bands. The collection evokes the era acutely, with James Brown and the Jackson 5 setting the stage for choice cult picks, including Chuck Mangione's florid and theatrical “Land of Make Believe” and the dubbed-out jazz fusion of Miroslav Vitous's “New York City.”—*Michaelangelo Matos*

“Nightly Met Opera Streams”

OPERA The Metropolitan Opera has announced that its next season won't begin before Dec. 31, so audiences will have to continue sating their operatic appetite with the company's free nightly streams for the foreseeable future. The schedule leans heavily on superstar performers

in core repertoire, but this week the Met shares high-definition video from two recent, revelatory stagings of operas by Philip Glass, both directed by Phelim McDermott and unavailable from the Met's on-demand subscription service. “Akhnaten,” recorded this past season and streaming on June 19, stars the arresting countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo as the heretic pharaoh of the title. “Satyagraha,” an ecstatic imagining of Gandhi's early years in South Africa, plays the following day, featuring Richard Croft in the production's 2011 revival. The streams are available for twenty-three hours; donations are encouraged.—*Steve Smith* (June 17-23 at 7:30.)

Opera Saratoga: “Connect! Daily”

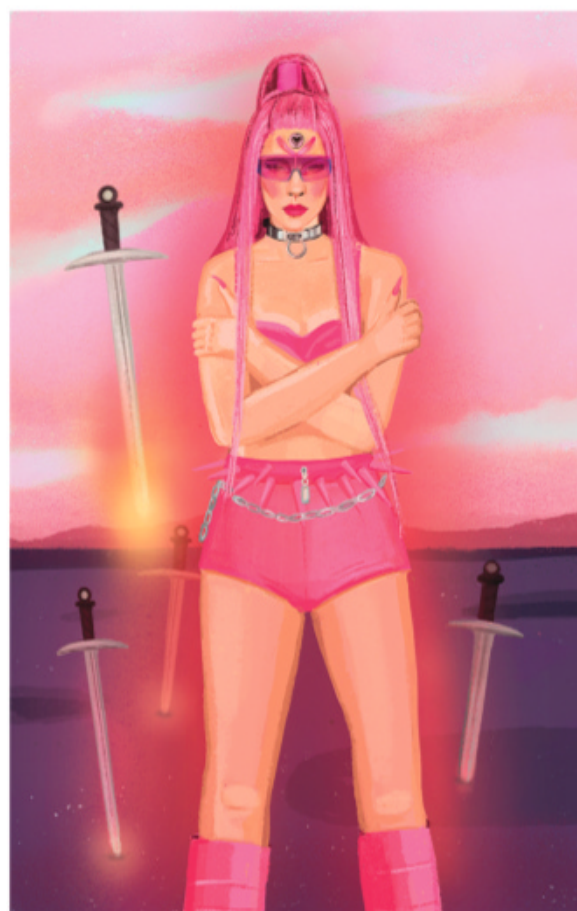
OPERA Forced to cancel its summer festival owing to COVID-19, Opera Saratoga has moved online with “Connect! Daily,” a series based around the works that would have been part of its season. For the next two and a half months, the upstate company will post a short, lightly edited video of a performance to its Facebook page and Web site every day at 9 A.M. For the month of June, the cast members of a would-be production of “The Pirates of Penzance” plunder Gilbert and Sullivan's oeuvre for semi-operatic treasures; July belongs to Beethoven, and August to Sondheim. Three additional series, which are available free of charge, are dedicated to trivia quizzes, professional mentorship, and panel discussions on topics such as race in opera.—*Oussama Zahr*

PODCASTS

Radical Imagination

It's become increasingly clear that planning for the future will require imagination: unprecedented times call for unprecedented

DANCE POP



On her new album, “Chromatica,” **Lady Gaga** aims to vanquish the personal demons and the hunger for notoriety that she embraced, with much success, on her dance-pop debut, “The Fame,” and its dark addendum, “The Fame Monster.” Described by *Billboard* as a “legacy artist” following her Super Bowl halftime show, in 2017—less than a decade into her recording career—Gaga pivoted away from genre-pushing experiments with “Shallow,” the mutant earworm hit from the 2018 movie “A Star Is Born.” With “Chromatica,” she returns triumphantly to what she calls the “dance floor I fought for,” piling on the hooks in sturdily built, if nostalgic, house and electro-pop anthems. Outfitted in hot-pink supershero costumes and unleashing her voice in thunderbolts, she claims a self-love that feels hard won.—*Oussama Zahr*



“Snap Judgment,” which describes itself as “storytelling with a beat,” debuted in 2010, after its host and executive producer, Glynn Washington, a musician, law-school graduate, and educator, won a talent contest run by PRX and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Washington wanted to create a new sound for public radio, and his show is distinguished by its urgent mood, cinematic music and sound design, and impassioned narration. A new episode, “Thick Blue Line,” centers on three stories about overaggressive policing—one told by Tariq (Black Thought) Trotter, of the Roots—and begins with Washington describing a recent protest in Oakland. “I want to weep,” Washington says. We hear cars honking, protestors yelling. “Hundreds, thousands of cars, bicycles, motorcycles . . . screaming back light at our national darkness as far as the eye can see. . . . I want my kids to feel this. I need them to have hope—even as I’ve lost my own.” Then he sets people chanting “Black lives matter” to a mighty beat.—*Sarah Larson*

solutions. In “Radical Imagination,” Angela Glover Blackwell, the founder of the equity-focused think tank PolicyLink, presents stories and conversations about big ideas, including reparations, housing as a human right, universal basic income, and—last October—police abolition. In an April episode, Blackwell describes the COVID era as “the kind of experience we expect to find only in science fiction and dystopian novels,” talks about “envisioning our way out of this pandemic,” and examines the literary genre of visionary fiction, which not only imagines a better society but is fostering a movement to make its ideas a reality. It’s a surprisingly encouraging show, enhanced by illustrative news clips, music, and Blackwell’s warm, grounded presence, which makes for a trustworthy atmosphere in which to consider bold ideas.—*Sarah Larson*

Slow Burn

In the first two seasons of the beloved series “Slow Burn,” from Slate, its co-creator Leon Neyfakh explored what it was like to live through a widely known but little-understood political period—first Watergate, then the Clinton impeachment. After Neyfakh left (to start “Fiasco,” on Luminary), “Slow Burn” shifted focus, examining the Biggie-Tupac saga. In its

new season, which began last week, it returns to its origins with a series about the political rise of David Duke, who, in the late eighties and early nineties, served as a representative in the Louisiana State House, won the Republican nomination for the Louisiana governor’s race, and mounted campaigns for the U.S. Senate and the Presidency—after having been a Grand Wizard in the Ku Klux Klan. The host, Josh Levin, who grew up in Louisiana during the Duke era, illuminates, through archival recordings and investigative reporting, how Duke got traction—via dirty tricks, telegenic looks, carefully reframed messaging, and positioning himself as “the ultimate outsider.”—*S.L.*

DANCE

Centennial Repertory Festival

Last year, for Merce Cunningham’s centenary, dance companies around the world performed works from his vast repertory. Fortunately, many of those performances were recorded and can now be streamed online. Every Monday, a new piece is added to the rotating library of the Centennial Repertory Festival (on its Vimeo page), curated by the Cunningham Trust, along

with interviews and materials that illuminate the choreography. One of Cunningham’s most epic works, “Biped,” from 1999, is available starting on June 15, in a performance by the French ensemble CNDC-Angers. Cunningham used large computer projections of figures in motion and shimmering costumes by Suzanne Gallo to augment the measured, almost meditative movements of the dancers onstage. The more playful piece “How to Pass, Kick, Fall and Run” (1965), performed to one-minute vignettes composed by John Cage, can be seen in a performance from the American Dance Festival through July 5.—*Marina Harss (vimeo.com/showcase/centennial-repertory-festival)*

DTH on Demand: “Return”

Dance Theatre of Harlem’s online programming continues, on June 20, with the digital premiere of “Return.” The work, created, in 1999, by Robert Garland, the company’s undervalued resident choreographer, is a crowd-pleasing, code-switching manifesto. The music is a playlist of James Brown and Aretha Franklin hits. The steps are classical and vernacular, drawn from the ballet classroom and from the club. The message is “We can do it all.”—*Brian Seibert (dancetheatreofharlem.org/dthondemand)*

Jacob’s Pillow

For the first time in its eighty-eight-year history, America’s foremost summer dance festival isn’t bringing dance to the Berkshires. The festival does continue virtually, though, through its extensive digital archive. And, on June 20, which would have been the date of this year’s opening gala, it streams a free event on its Web site. Borrowing the title of a series of lectures once given by Ted Shawn, the Pillow’s evangelizing founder, “Dance We Must” boasts Wendy Whelan and Kyle Abraham as hosts. Along with greetings from surprise guests, there will be performances, made for the occasion and prerecorded, including a new piece by Abraham and another by the tap wizard Michelle Dorrance.—*B.S. (jacobsillow.org)*

“Love from BAM”

So far, the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s theatres-are-dark digital programming has reflected the institution’s wealth of dance history only scantily. That starts to change on June 18, with the release of “Watermill,” Luca Veggetti’s 2018 reimagining of an experimental 1972 memory ballet by Jerome Robbins. Inspired by Noh drama and the trendsetting theatre of Robert Wilson, the original provoked strong reactions, both against and in favor of its meditative slowness. This intimate revival, starring the former New York City Ballet principal dancer Joaquín de Luz, offered a chance to reconsider the work—and now does again, online.—*B.S. (bam.org/watermill2018)*

WPA Virtual Commissions

With the uncertainty surrounding when dancers will be able to gather in studios, some institutions, including the Guggenheim, with its “Works & Process” series, are commissioning dance videos. One such video already seems destined for a long afterlife: Jamar Roberts’s claustrophobic, tightly framed “Cooped,” a study of solitude and the black male body. On



^{the} Politician

JUNE 19 | NETFLIX

June 21, the series will release a new work by the Swedish dancemaker Pontus Lidberg, who, in 2010, made a handsome, coolly lit dance film called “Labyrinth Within.” A piece by the performer John Jarboe, a creator of cabaret-inspired plays for his company the Bearded Ladies, comes on June 22, followed, the next day, by a work from the Canadian drag artist Victoria Sin.—*M.H.* (guggenheim.org/event/event_series/works-process)

ART

The Chicago Imagists

This brightly encyclopedic and consummately navigable Web site is an enduring companion to the 2014 documentary “Hairy Who & the

Chicago Imagists,” by Pentimenti Productions, which chronicles an unruly, surrealist strain of Pop art and its most prominent collective. The Hairy Who was a group of six painters—Jim Falconer, Art Green, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Suellen Rocca, and Karl Wirsum—who attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and began exhibiting together in the mid-nineteen-sixties, but adhered to no uniform vision. From Nutt’s goofy and unsettling figuration to Green’s psychedelic satires of advertising illustration and Nilsson’s otherworldly watercolor landscapes, they metabolized an array of influences—folk art, comics, and film noir among them—in ribald, fantastic, sometimes politically pointed works, which the site’s creators break down in a comprehensive A-to-Z index. Deftly compiled research into the Chicago Imagists’ major and minor figures (as well as pertinent concepts and elucidating context)

makes this online resource an essential go-to for both casual and advanced students of the fervid scene.—*Johanna Fateman* (chicagoimagists.com)

Edward Hopper

I haven’t seen this large show at the Beyeler Foundation, Switzerland’s premier museum of modern art. I take its fine catalogue, “Edward Hopper: A Fresh Look at Landscape,” edited by the exhibition’s curator, Ulf Küster, as occasion enough for reflecting anew on the artist’s stubborn force. (A selection of Hopper’s paintings is also on view on the museum’s Web site.) The visual bard of American solitude—not loneliness, a maudlin projection—speaks to our isolated states these days with fortuitous poignance. But Hopper is always doing that, pandemic or no pandemic. Aloneness is his great theme, symbolizing America: insecure selfhoods in a country that is only abstractly a nation. (“E pluribus unum,” a magnificent ideal, thuds on “unum” every day throughout the land.) The emotional tug of all of Hopper’s characters requires their unawareness of being looked at. To see them is to take on a peculiar responsibility. Can you pledge patriotic allegiance to a void? Hopper shows how, exploring a condition in which, by being separate, we belong together. You don’t have to like the idea, but, once you’ve truly experienced this painter’s art, it is as impossible to ignore as a stone in your shoe.—*Peter Schjeldahl* (foundationbeyeler.ch)

Elizabeth Peyton

This American painter is best known for her unapologetically sentimental portraits of friends and famous figures, from Kurt Cobain to Napoleon. The Web address of Peyton’s digital project “Eternal Return” (hosted by the Gladstone gallery) shares its name, Petitcrieu, with that of a magical dog in the medieval legend of Tristan and Iseult, a tipoff to her eclectic interests. The site is closer to a touch-activated film than to a conventional online exhibition. Downward scrolling yields unexpected movement onscreen: images are cannily layered, edged to the side, or zoomed in and out. Photographs (whose subjects include ancient Egyptian artifacts, fiery sunsets, and Greta Thunberg) outnumber reproductions of Peyton’s own colorful, delicate works. The grand unifying theme is recurrence, both visual and historical, but an artful browser-cache aesthetic also anchors the project in the everyday. The intimacy of smartphone viewing lends itself particularly well to Peyton’s essayistic piece, which is rendered with her signature light touch and seductive Pop romanticism.—*J.F.* (petitcrieu.com)

MOVIES

Roll Red Roll

Nancy Schwartzman’s 2018 documentary is sober and unexcitable, as it must be, in its presentation of the facts. The story that she recounts, dating from 2012, is centered on the sexual assault of a sixteen-year-old girl in Steubenville, Ohio. Two members of the high-school football team were convicted of rape. Teen-age drinking, unsurprisingly, was part of the equation, but what made the case especially disturbing, and very

ART ONLINE



Following the unconscionable killing of George Floyd, the nation’s museums flocked to social media to condemn racism—messages that often came off more as marketing ploys than as commitments to change. One inspiring exception is the **Walker Art Center**, a contemporary-art mecca in Minnesota, which announced on Instagram that it would cut ties with the Minneapolis Police Department until certain demonstrable reforms take place: “Demilitarizing training programs, holding officers accountable for the use of excessive force, and treating communities of color with dignity and respect.” The action was small—the Walker had contracted off-duty officers for security a few times a year—but meaningful, especially for this influential institution, which, in the past, has occasionally seemed to value the international art world at the expense of its own back yard. (Kudos to the Walker’s thoughtful new director, Mary Ceruti, for guiding the change.) The museum’s Web site, walkerart.org, has also responded to the groundswell of protest with swift sensitivity, publishing fresh commissions—a meditation on Floyd and black utopianism by the young Minneapolis poet and educator Keno Evol—and deep cuts from its archive, including video of an illuminating conversation, from 2005, between the poet Elizabeth Alexander and the painter Kerry James Marshall, whose 2003 canvas “Gulf Stream” is pictured above.—*Andrea K. Scott*

In uncertain times,
no matter what tomorrow
holds, we remain invested

In Investors
In Optimism
In Guidance
In Security
In Kindness
In Service
In Clarity
In Your Needs
In Your Satisfaction
In Your Tomorrow

We remain invested in you.



Own your tomorrow.



“The Killing Floor,” the first feature directed by Bill Duke, from 1984, is a revelatory historical drama that offers a powerful template for social analysis in fiction. (It’s streaming on Film Forum’s Virtual Cinema, in a new restoration.) The film follows Frank Custer (Damien Leake), a young black man who, in 1917, moves from his small home town to Chicago. There, he finds work in a slaughterhouse, joins its union, and organizes other black workers. But, the following year, when the First World War ends and returning veterans reclaim their jobs, management undermines the integrated union by stoking dissension between black laborers and white ones; that conflict leads, in 1919, to race riots that leave the city’s black neighborhoods in ruins. The deeply researched script, by Leslie Lee, dramatizes large-scale political forces and local conflicts in intricate detail. Frank is in every one of Duke’s stark yet teeming tableaux, which display the long-term effects and daily aggressions of racism, and the struggles of organized labor, as personal experience.—*Richard Brody*

much of its time, was the role played by technology: photographs of the naked victim were distributed online to the offenders’ friends, and they in turn were filmed reacting to such images. Their jesting went viral, and thus a culture of voracious misogyny was exposed, to the discomfort of school authorities and the indignation—or shame—of local citizens. Schwartzman talks to many of those affected, and her movie is strewn, ominously, with the debris of social media.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/1/19.) (Streaming on Netflix.)

Strong Island

Yance Ford’s extraordinarily dramatic documentary is both personal and investigative. It’s the story of an unresolved killing: Yance’s brother, William Ford, Jr., a black man, was killed in the family’s home town of Central Islip, Long Island, in 1992, and William’s killer, Mark Reilly, a white man, did not face charges. Yance reconstructs the events in his own words and in interviews with his mother, Barbara (a retired high-school principal), his sister, and William’s friends, including one who was present at the scene. The story involves race relations on Long Island and their historical

roots, which emerge in Barbara’s account of the family’s move from South Carolina to Brooklyn, and then to the suburbs. At the time that William was killed, Yance identified as a woman and hadn’t yet come out as queer; that aspect of his life plays a role in the story. The filmmaker is both a witness to and a participant in the events of the film, and its elements of pain and guilt are reflected in his grief-stricken, self-interrogating artistry. Released in 2017.—*Richard Brody* (Streaming on Netflix.)

Summer in the City

This engaged and discerning West German documentary about Manhattan’s Upper West Side, from 1968, celebrates the neighborhood’s vigorous street life while foregrounding its political activism and probing its social conflicts. The filmmakers, Christian Blackwood and Robert Leacock—working with the German novelist Uwe Johnson, who wrote and delivered the voice-over narration—craft a method of collaborative portraiture, eliciting frank discussions with a wide array of residents, including two young heroin users, a family with seven children, and two trans women. A protest out-

side City Hall, mainly by black women, against both cuts in welfare benefits and the so-called urban renewal around Lincoln Center—which was driving many poor and black people out of the neighborhood—ends with horrific police violence. The filmmakers speak at length with Jeannette Washington, one of the protest’s organizers, who sought to create a large-scale movement. The neighborhood’s politics and festivities converge in a weeklong block party sponsored by the Peace and Freedom Party; Blackwood’s agile, alert cinematography offers a moving vision of civic vitality amid the city’s tensions.—*R.B.* (Streaming on Vimeo.)

Take This Hammer

When James Baldwin visited San Francisco in the spring of 1963, he took part in a documentary, directed by Richard O. Moore, that would reveal the racial injustices behind the city’s freethinking façade and dispel the illusion that American racism was confined to the Jim Crow South. Baldwin, guided by the social-services executive Orville Luster, interviews young black residents and learns of the massive uprooting of their neighborhoods under the guise of urban renewal. The movie’s participants speak in detail about unemployment, police harassment, despair over the prospects of the civil-rights movement, and anger at their own exclusion from the city’s prosperity and governance; one young man discusses his hope for violent revolution by black Americans and his belief that it can be organized. Baldwin, talking with Luster, calls white liberals “missionaries” unwilling to take risks for comprehensive change. Baldwin’s immersive local inquiry creates a deeply, passionately cross-sectional analysis of American life and politics at the moment. (Both the director’s cut and the shorter, censored broadcast version are available.)—*R.B.* (Streaming on Bay Area Television Archive.)

Tommaso

This quasi-confessional drama about a frustrated filmmaker, written and directed by Abel Ferrara, plays more like a vain boast. Willem Dafoe gives a fierce and clench-jawed performance in the title role of an American in Rome who’s writing his new project (something about hunting bears in Siberia). Tommaso lives tensely with his wife, Nikki (Cristina Chiriac, Ferrara’s real-life wife), and their young daughter, Deedee (Anna Ferrara, Chiriac and Ferrara’s child). Tommaso is a controlling and condescending partner who berates Nikki over trivial domesticities and gets creepily involved with a young woman who’s his acting student; Ferrara films naked actresses playing out Tommaso’s jejune erotic fantasies while emphasizing his sexual frustrations with Nikki. The film’s sole moments of empathy are found in scenes of recovering substance abusers speaking at meetings; Tommaso is among them, and he devotes one session to complaining about Nikki. He’s a self-pitying martyr to marriage and fatherhood, devoid of introspection, and the movie stays close to him throughout, with swooningly aggrandizing camerawork and a script that offers no differing perspectives.—*R.B.* (Streaming on Lincoln Center and other sites.)

For more reviews, visit newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town

For certain adults with **newly diagnosed non-small cell lung cancer** that has spread



1ST + ONLY CHEMO-FREE COMBO OF 2 IMMUNOTHERAPIES

If you have **advanced non-small cell lung cancer**, there's been a new development. Today, if you test positive for PD-L1, the chemo-free combo OPDIVO® + YERVOY® is **now FDA-approved** and may be your first treatment. Ask your doctor if the **chemo-free combo OPDIVO + YERVOY** is right for you.

Learn more at lungcancerhope.com or call **1-833-OPDIVOYERVOY**

Indication & Important Safety Information for OPDIVO® (nivolumab) + YERVOY® (ipilimumab)

What is OPDIVO + YERVOY?

OPDIVO® is a prescription medicine used in combination with YERVOY® (ipilimumab) as a first treatment for adults with a type of advanced stage lung cancer (called non-small cell lung cancer) when your lung cancer has spread to other parts of your body (metastatic) **and** your tumors are positive for PD-L1, but do not have an abnormal EGFR or ALK gene.

It is not known if OPDIVO is safe and effective in children younger than 18 years of age.

Important Safety Information for OPDIVO + YERVOY

OPDIVO is a medicine that may treat certain cancers by working with your immune system. OPDIVO can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in any area of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death. These problems may happen anytime during treatment or even after your treatment has ended. Some of these problems may happen more often when OPDIVO is used in combination with YERVOY.

YERVOY can cause serious side effects in many parts of your body which can lead to death. These problems may happen anytime during treatment with YERVOY or after you have completed treatment.

Serious side effects may include:

- **Lung problems (pneumonitis).** Symptoms of pneumonitis may include: new or worsening cough; chest pain; and shortness of breath.
- **Intestinal problems (colitis) that can lead to tears or holes in your intestine.** Signs and symptoms of colitis may include: diarrhea (loose stools) or more bowel movements than usual; blood in your stools or dark, tarry, sticky stools; and severe stomach area (abdomen) pain or tenderness.
- **Liver problems (hepatitis).** Signs and symptoms of hepatitis may include: yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes; severe nausea or vomiting; pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen); drowsiness; dark urine (tea colored); bleeding or bruising more easily than normal; feeling less hungry than usual; and decreased energy.
- **Hormone gland problems (especially the thyroid, pituitary, adrenal glands, and pancreas).** Signs and symptoms that your hormone glands are not working properly may include: headaches that will not go away or unusual headaches; extreme tiredness; weight gain or weight loss; dizziness or fainting; changes in mood or behavior, such as decreased sex drive, irritability, or forgetfulness; hair loss; feeling cold; constipation; voice gets deeper; and excessive thirst or lots of urine.
- **Kidney problems, including nephritis and kidney failure.** Signs of kidney problems may include: decrease in the amount of urine; blood in your urine; swelling in your ankles; and loss of appetite.
- **Skin problems.** Signs of these problems may include: rash; itching; skin blistering; and ulcers in the mouth or other mucous membranes.
- **Inflammation of the brain (encephalitis).** Signs and symptoms of encephalitis may include: headache; fever; tiredness or weakness; confusion; memory problems; sleepiness; seeing or hearing things that are not really there (hallucinations); seizures; and stiff neck.
- **Problems in other organs.** Signs of these problems may include: changes in eyesight; severe or persistent muscle or joint pains; severe muscle weakness; and chest pain.

Additional serious side effects observed during a separate study of YERVOY alone include:

- **Nerve problems that can lead to paralysis.** Symptoms of nerve problems may include: unusual weakness of legs, arms, or face; and numbness or tingling in hands or feet.

- **Eye problems.** Symptoms may include: blurry vision, double vision, or other vision problems; and eye pain or redness.

Get medical help immediately if you develop any of these symptoms or they get worse. It may keep these problems from becoming more serious. Your healthcare team will check you for side effects during treatment and may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines. If you have a serious side effect, your healthcare team may also need to delay or completely stop your treatment.

OPDIVO and OPDIVO + YERVOY can cause serious side effects, including:

- **Severe infusion-related reactions.** Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you get these symptoms during an infusion: chills or shaking; itching or rash; flushing; difficulty breathing; dizziness; fever; and feeling like passing out.

Pregnancy and Nursing:

- Tell your healthcare provider if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. OPDIVO and YERVOY can harm your unborn baby. If you are a female who is able to become pregnant, your healthcare provider should do a pregnancy test before you start receiving OPDIVO. Females who are able to become pregnant should use an effective method of birth control during and for at least 5 months after the last dose. Talk to your healthcare provider about birth control methods that you can use during this time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you become pregnant or think you are pregnant during treatment. You or your healthcare provider should contact Bristol Myers Squibb at 1-800-721-5072 as soon as you become aware of the pregnancy.
- Pregnancy Safety Surveillance Study: Females who become pregnant during treatment with YERVOY are encouraged to enroll in a Pregnancy Safety Surveillance Study. The purpose of this study is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. You or your healthcare provider can enroll in the Pregnancy Safety Surveillance Study by calling 1-844-593-7869.
- Before receiving treatment, tell your healthcare provider if you are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if either treatment passes into your breast milk. Do not breastfeed during treatment and for 5 months after the last dose.

Tell your healthcare provider about:

- Your health problems or concerns if you: have immune system problems such as autoimmune disease, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, lupus, or sarcoidosis; have had an organ transplant; have lung or breathing problems; have liver problems; or have any other medical conditions.
- All the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

The most common side effects of OPDIVO, when used in combination with YERVOY, include: feeling tired; diarrhea; rash; itching; nausea; pain in muscles, bones, and joints, fever; cough; decreased appetite; vomiting; stomach-area (abdominal) pain; shortness of breath; upper respiratory tract infection; headache; low thyroid hormone levels (hypothyroidism); decreased weight; and dizziness.

These are not all the possible side effects. For more information, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts for OPDIVO and YERVOY, including Boxed WARNING for YERVOY regarding immune-mediated side effects, on the following page.

IMPORTANT FACTS

The information below does not take the place of talking with your healthcare professional. Only your healthcare professional knows the specifics of your condition and how OPDIVO® (nivolumab) in combination with YERVOY® (ipilimumab) may fit into your overall therapy. Talk to your healthcare professional if you have any questions about OPDIVO (pronounced op-DEE-voh) and YERVOY (pronounced yur-voi).

Rx ONLY

What is the most important information I should know about OPDIVO (nivolumab) and YERVOY (ipilimumab)?

OPDIVO and YERVOY are medicines that may treat certain cancers by working with your immune system. OPDIVO and YERVOY can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in any area of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death and may happen anytime during treatment or even after your treatment has ended. Some of these problems may happen more often when OPDIVO is used in combination with YERVOY. YERVOY can cause serious side effects in many parts of your body which can lead to death. These problems may happen anytime during treatment with YERVOY or after you have completed treatment.

Call or see your healthcare provider right away if you develop any symptoms of the following problems or these symptoms get worse. Do not try to treat symptoms yourself.

Lung problems (pneumonitis). Symptoms of pneumonitis may include:

- new or worsening cough
- chest pain
- shortness of breath

Intestinal problems (colitis) that can lead to tears or holes in your intestine. Signs and symptoms of colitis may include:

- diarrhea (loose stools) or more bowel movements than usual
- mucus or blood in your stools or dark, tarry, sticky stools
- stomach-area (abdomen) pain or tenderness
- you may or may not have fever

Liver problems (hepatitis) that can lead to liver failure. Signs and symptoms of hepatitis may include:

- yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes
- nausea or vomiting
- pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen)
- drowsiness
- dark urine (tea colored)
- bleeding or bruising more easily than normal
- feeling less hungry than usual
- decreased energy

Hormone gland problems (especially the thyroid, pituitary, and adrenal glands; and pancreas). Signs and symptoms that your hormone glands are not working properly may include:

- headaches that will not go away or unusual headaches
- extreme tiredness or unusual sluggishness
- weight gain or weight loss
- dizziness or fainting
- changes in mood or behavior, such as decreased sex drive, irritability, or forgetfulness
- hair loss
- feeling cold
- constipation
- voice gets deeper
- excessive thirst or lots of urine

Kidney problems, including nephritis and kidney failure. Signs of kidney problems may include:

- decrease in the amount of urine
- blood in your urine
- swelling in your ankles
- loss of appetite

Skin Problems. Signs of these problems may include:

- skin rash with or without itching
- itching
- skin blistering or peeling
- sores or ulcers in mouth or other mucous membranes

Inflammation of the brain (encephalitis). Signs and symptoms of encephalitis may include:

- headache
- fever
- tiredness or weakness
- confusion
- memory problems
- sleepiness
- seeing or hearing things that are not really there (hallucinations)
- seizures
- stiff neck

Problems in other organs. Signs of these problems may include:

- changes in eyesight
- severe or persistent muscle or joint pains
- severe muscle weakness
- chest pain

Additional serious side effects observed during a separate study of YERVOY (ipilimumab) alone include:

Nerve problems that can lead to paralysis. Symptoms of nerve problems may include:

- unusual weakness of legs, arms, or face
- numbness or tingling in hands or feet

Eye problems. Symptoms may include:

- blurry vision, double vision, or other vision problems
- eye pain or redness

Get medical help immediately if you develop any of these symptoms or they get worse. It may keep these problems from becoming more serious. Your healthcare team will check you for side effects during treatment and may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines. If you have a serious side effect, your healthcare team may also need to delay or completely stop your treatment with OPDIVO (nivolumab) and YERVOY.

What are OPDIVO and YERVOY?

OPDIVO and YERVOY are prescription medicines used to treat adults with a type of advanced stage lung cancer called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). OPDIVO may be used in combination with YERVOY as your first treatment for NSCLC:

- when your lung cancer has spread to other parts of your body (metastatic), and
- your tumors are positive for PD-L1, but do not have an abnormal EGFR or ALK gene.

It is not known if OPDIVO and YERVOY are safe and effective when used in children younger than 18 years of age.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before receiving OPDIVO and YERVOY?

Before you receive OPDIVO and YERVOY, tell your healthcare provider if you:

- have immune system problems (autoimmune disease) such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, lupus, or sarcoidosis
- have had an organ transplant
- have lung or breathing problems
- have liver problems
- have any other medical conditions
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. OPDIVO and YERVOY can harm your unborn baby. **Females who are able to become pregnant:**

Your healthcare provider should do a pregnancy test before you start receiving OPDIVO and YERVOY.

- You should use an effective method of birth control during and for at least 5 months after the last dose. Talk to your healthcare provider about birth control methods that you can use during this time.

- Tell your healthcare provider right away if you become pregnant or think you are pregnant during treatment. You or your healthcare provider should contact Bristol Myers Squibb at 1-800-721-5072 as soon as you become aware of the pregnancy.

- **Pregnancy Safety Surveillance Study:** Females who become pregnant during treatment with YERVOY (ipilimumab) are encouraged to enroll in a Pregnancy Safety Surveillance Study. The purpose of this study is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. You or your healthcare provider can enroll in the Pregnancy Safety Surveillance Study by calling 1-844-593-7869.

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if OPDIVO (nivolumab) or YERVOY passes into your breast milk. **Do not** breastfeed during treatment and for 5 months after the last dose.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your healthcare providers and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

What are the possible side effects of OPDIVO and YERVOY? OPDIVO and YERVOY can cause serious side effects, including:

- **See “What is the most important information I should know about OPDIVO and YERVOY?”**
- **Severe infusion reactions.** Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you get these symptoms during an infusion of OPDIVO or YERVOY:
 - chills or shaking
 - dizziness
 - itching or rash
 - fever
 - flushing
 - feeling like passing out
 - difficulty breathing

The most common side effects of OPDIVO when used in combination with YERVOY include:

- feeling tired
- diarrhea
- rash
- itching
- nausea
- pain in muscles, bones, and joints
- fever
- cough
- decreased appetite
- vomiting
- stomach-area (abdominal) pain
- shortness of breath
- upper respiratory tract infection
- headache
- low thyroid hormone levels (hypothyroidism)
- decreased weight
- dizziness

These are not all the possible side effects of OPDIVO and YERVOY. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

This is a brief summary of the most important information about OPDIVO and YERVOY. For more information, talk with your healthcare provider, call 1-855-673-4861, or go to www.OPDIVO.com.

Manufactured by:

Bristol-Myers Squibb Company
Princeton, New Jersey 08543 USA

 **Bristol Myers Squibb™**



TABLES FOR TWO

& Sons

447 Rogers Ave., Brooklyn

In her 1976 book, “The Taste of Country Cooking,” the late, great chef Edna Lewis wrote that, in her home town of Freetown, Virginia, a farming community founded by former slaves, “ham held the same rating as the basic black dress. If you had a ham in the meat house, any situation could be faced.” André Mack has a ham in the meat house, and then some. In January, Mack, a sommelier and winemaker who once ran the beverage program at Per Se, opened & Sons, a “ham bar,” in Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, with a menu offering no fewer than ten different country hams, all sourced domestically, plus American-made wines (including bottles from his own label, Maison Noir, out of Oregon), cheeses, and other charcuterie. And then, just as he was starting to consistently fill its twenty seats, the coronavirus swept through New York.

Luckily, & Sons was always conceived as a two-part operation: Mack, who lives in the neighborhood with his wife, the writer Phoebe Damrosch, and their four boys, had already planned to

open & Sons Buttery, a ham-centric grocery, next door. (He also owns Vyne Yard, a nearby wine store.) The Buttery was slated to debut in July, but, after the bar was forced to close, he got the shop open for curbside pickup in April. As of last week, customers may enter the premises, two at a time.

Thanks to & Sons Buttery, I have added to my larder luscious, creamy sheets of Benton’s Extra-Aged, from Tennessee, hickory-smoked and hung to dry for around two years, and ruddy, bracingly funky slices of cured Lady Edison, from North Carolina. I have swooned over springy pale-pink mortadella, speckled with bright-green Sicilian pistachios, made from Midwest-raised, heritage-breed pork by Tempesta Artisans, a small company in Chicago. Mack recently told me that his decision to carry only domestic products has been taken by some as a nationalistic gesture, but “that’s not it,” he said. “The way we romanticize Italy and France—I realized that we could do that here. We’ve been curing hams for over one hundred years. It’s a celebration of American food heritage.”

The ham that Mack grew up on was of the spiral-cut, glazed, and baked variety, plus a New Jersey specialty called Taylor Pork Roll; his mother is from Trenton, and her family was from North Carolina. As an adult, Mack developed a passion for European charcuterie, and for vintage meat slicers: “First time I went into any Bastianich restaurant, I was, like, ‘What’s that thing back there

that looks like a Ferrari?’” In 2013, he bought a slicer on Craigslist, from a deli on Long Island, and was shocked to find that it was made, in 1910, in the United States. American country hams, though produced in a similar fashion to jamón serrano or prosciutto, have not traditionally been sliced thin, Mack noted—“You cut off hunks of it, you threw it in the frying pan”—but chefs including David Chang and Sean Brock were starting to treat them like the finest salumi. Mack had been excited by the renaissance of American cheese and wine in the past couple of decades. Now was the time for American ham.

Upending perspectives in the culinary world is familiar territory for Mack, who was the first black person to win the prestigious Best Young Sommeliers Competition, hosted by a gastronomical society founded in Paris in 1950. He started his career waiting tables at a Red Lobster in Texas. After college, he found himself watching a lot of “Frasier.” “The way they talked about wine just made it seem like I was missing out,” he told me. “That show gave me the courage to walk into a wine store,” where, when someone poured him a taste and asked what he thought, he quipped, “It’s no Château d’Yquem”—a Frasier favorite—and got a big laugh. “Everybody’s, like, ‘How is it being a black man in such a white industry?’ It’s no different than any other day of my life,” Mack said. “Every day I show up, I challenge the status quo. Hey, I’m here. That’s how I choose to confront it.”

—Hannah Goldfield



Help feed NYC's children and families **now.**



With the COVID-19 crisis forcing schools and many businesses to close, NYC's children and their families urgently need help getting food now. You can help keep City Harvest's trucks on the road and full of food for our city's youngest New Yorkers and their families.

Donate at
cityharvest.org/feednyckids
#WeAreCityHarvest



♥aetna™

BlackRock.

Blackstone Charitable Foundation

citi

KPMG

★ PRET ★



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT AMERICAN SPRING

Consider for a moment how the events of May 25th through June 9th—the days of democratic bedlam in the streets, bracketed by the death and the burial of George Floyd—would appear had they occurred in some distant nation that most Americans have heard of but might not be able to find on a map. Consider that, in the midst of a pandemic whose toll was magnified by government incompetence, a member of a long-exploited ethnic minority was killed by the state, in an act defined by its casual sadism. Demonstrators pour into the streets near the site of the killing, in a scene that is soon repeated in city after city. The police arrest members of the media reporting the story. The President cites a threat to law and order, and federal agents are dispatched to disrupt protests in the nation's capital, using tear gas and a military helicopter. These acts further erode his already tenuous position, prompting church leaders to rebuke him, and decorated generals to question his fitness for office.

In such a scenario, the lines of conflict gain new clarity, the abuses more unqualified horror. American commentators would compare the successive nights of protests to the Iranian uprisings of 2009 and the Arab Spring of 2011. The U.S. State Department, depending on its allegiances, might surreptitiously aid the protesters. We would all recognize the moment as the product of a traumatized society.

Now consider a different idea, that the death of George Floyd did occur in

another country: the traumatized version of America inhabited by black people. Fifty-two years ago, following the storm of riots that swept through 1967 and 1968, the Kerner Commission report noted that “our nation is moving toward two societies—one black, one white, separate and unequal.” Today, the weight of grief and poverty in this country still falls disproportionately on black shoulders. The eight minutes and forty-six seconds during which a Minneapolis police officer killed George Floyd as three others looked on cannot be understood outside the context of a pandemic in which African-Americans have died at three times the rate of white Americans. The chaotic, angry, defiant tableaux in the streets of Minneapolis, Seattle, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Oakland, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Louisville, San Francisco, Indianapolis, Charleston, Detroit, Baltimore, and beyond repre-

sent a reckoning, a kind of American Spring, one long in the making and ignited not just by a single police killing. In death, George Floyd's name has become a metaphor for the stacked inequities of the society that produced them.

Race, to the degree that it represents anything coherent in the United States, is shorthand for a specific set of life probabilities. The inequalities between black and white Americans are documented in rates of morbidity and infant mortality, wealth, and unemployment, which attest that although race may be a biological fiction, its reality is seen in what is likely to happen in our lives. The more than forty million people of African descent who live in the United States recognize this reality, but it's largely invisible in the lives of white Americans. As with men, who, upon seeing the scroll of #MeToo testimonies, asked their wives, daughters, sisters, and co-workers, “Is it really that bad?,” the shock of revelation that attended the video of Floyd's death is itself a kind of inequality, a barometer of the extent to which one group of Americans have moved through life largely free from the burden of such terrible knowledge.

At a congressional hearing last Wednesday, Philonise Floyd said that he hoped his brother would be “more than a face on a T-shirt, more than a name on a list that won't stop growing.” The Reverend Al Sharpton cited that list, of the wrongfully dead, in the eulogy that he delivered at Floyd's funeral, naming Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin. He could have gone on: Jordan Davis, Rekia Boyd, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice. A



sentiment common among many African-Americans is that these people lived and died in Black America, which is a different place from America at large—and that their deaths, most of which came at the hands of law enforcement, represent a broader reality, even though a significant number of white Americans were skeptical of its existence.

The demographics of the protests that followed those deaths tended to reflect this disparity, with overwhelmingly black crowds turning out to demand justice. But Floyd's death, and the agonizing, protracted manner in which it occurred, has produced a different reaction. Seventy-one per cent of white Americans now say that racial discrimination is a "big problem." They, too, rushed into the streets. In Salt Lake City, where the black population stands at just two per cent, huge, raucous protests stretched on for days.

Confronted with this challenge, the system went on a self-incrimination spree. In Atlanta, police officers used stun guns against two college students as they sat in a car; in Buffalo, officers shoved a seventy-five-year-old man to the ground, while others walked past as he lay bleeding; in Brooklyn, two N.Y.P.D. S.U.V.s drove into protesters. Images of such incidents spurred protests and acts of solidarity in dozens of countries. For many people, what they saw was astonishing not because it was contrary to what they'd heard of this

nation but because it was similar to the repression they'd experienced at home.

Policing is inescapably a metaphor for governmental power. The impunity of the American police has been achieved by slow accretion through the decades, and with the tacit understanding that it would be deployed in great disproportion against black people. But, whatever ensues now, we are in a different moment. Officers in Atlanta, New York City, Buffalo, and Philadelphia have been charged with assault for their actions against protesters. Calls to "defund the police," stripping them of all but their core law-enforcement functions, and allocating resources to other community institutions, are being taken seriously; in Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti has pledged to cut two hundred and fifty million dollars from the police budget. Last week, Democrats in the House of Representatives announced the Justice in Policing Act, which would ban choke holds, mandate body cameras, and establish a national registry of police misconduct. In Minnesota, Governor Tim Walz endorsed a package of comprehensive police reforms. The Louisville city council passed Breonna's Law, for Breonna Taylor, banning the no-knock warrants that enabled the police to shoot her while she was in bed.

There have been other developments. The argument once mired in pointless circumambulation, between "All Lives Matter" and "Blue Lives Matter," has

been settled. Muriel Bowser, the mayor of Washington, D.C., renamed a street leading to the White House Black Lives Matter Plaza, emblazoning the phrase on the asphalt in gigantic yellow letters. The near-ubiquity of those words in the past three weeks—Amazon, Apple, and Airbnb all added some version of it to their home pages—has prompted a consideration of what this means in practical terms. Critics on social media were quick to assert that the truest endorsement of Black Lives Matter lies not in what you say on your Web site but in what you do for your black employees.

The American Spring has not toppled a power, but it has led to a reassessment of the relationship between that power and the citizens from whom it is derived. It has resolved any remaining questions regarding Donald Trump's utter ineptitude as President; it has laid bare the contradictory and partial democracy that the United States holds before the world as exemplary. Most significant, it has clarified our terms. Floyd's life is the awful price we have paid for a momentarily common tongue, a language that precisely conveys what we are speaking of when we say "American." Fourteen successive days of protest opened the possibility that George Floyd died in America, not simply in its black corollary. The task that remains is to insure that more of us might actually live there.

—Jelani Cobb

THE BENCH WINNING BUT LOSING



If you turn on your TV and see Benjamin Crump, it usually means that something terrible has happened. Crump is the go-to civil-rights attorney for families who have lost a loved one to police violence; he is often referred to as "the black Gloria Allred." In 2012, after Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman, in a suburb of Orlando, Martin's family hired Crump, who is based in Tallahassee, to represent them. He made the rounds on

cable news to talk about the case; shortly afterward, protests erupted in Florida. (Zimmerman was eventually acquitted.) Two years later, Crump took on another high-profile case, after Michael Brown was shot dead by Darren Wilson, a police officer, in Ferguson, Missouri. (More protests; Wilson was never charged.) Now Crump is representing the family of George Floyd, who was killed, three weeks ago, by Derek Chauvin, a cop in Minneapolis, who knelt on Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes. "It was the knee of the entire police department that killed George Floyd," Crump said.

Crump is fifty years old, with a round face and a bald head. He wears a gold eagle lapel pin. One of his former law-school classmates recently said that,

when a family hires Crump as its lawyer, he becomes its publicist, lobbyist, and therapist, too. "And I suspect," the classmate added, "that, by the end, he becomes a family member." Before Floyd's funeral in Houston, Crump helped Floyd's son, Quincy Mason, put on his necktie.

But some activists aren't buying it. When Crump announced his involvement in the Floyd case, he was instantly derided on Twitter as an "opportunist" with a "losing track record." (Stephon Adams, a supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement who lives in Birmingham, Alabama, tweeted, "If I am ever killed by a police or by a white person PLEASE MAKE SURE MY FAMILY DOES NOT HIRE BEN CRUMP! He is just as horrible



Benjamin Crump

as those ambulance chasing attorneys.”)

Some of this criticism seems to stem from a misunderstanding of Crump’s role in criminal cases. In the event of a police killing, murder and manslaughter cases are tried by local prosecutors, not by attorneys for hire. In the Floyd case, the prosecution of Chauvin, and of the three other cops who helped him restrain Floyd, will be led by Keith Ellison, Minnesota’s attorney general. While the state works on the criminal case, Crump will pursue civil action: a wrongful-death lawsuit against the city of Minneapolis.

Given how sympathetic juries tend to be toward police officers, the civil case is often the only case that can be won. Crump helped Michael Brown’s family win a \$1.5 million settlement from the city of Ferguson, and he helped Trayvon Martin’s family settle, for an undisclosed sum, with the homeowners’ association in the neighborhood where Martin was killed. If Crump loses a case, he doesn’t charge anything. But if he wins he takes a third of the money awarded. He has fought more than two hundred police-violence cases, and he has won cash settlements in all of them. “We have never not recovered for these families,” he said. But the officers rarely end up in prison, and the murders go on. Crump could be the winningest attorney in the country who still reeks of failure.

Other people say that, even if Crump did not lead those unsuccessful criminal cases, he’s still partly responsible for

losing them. He is known for generating buzz before a trial. (“We can’t control anything in the criminal case,” he said. “So all you can do is try to advocate and argue in the court of public opinion.”) This publicity can be crucial; sometimes it’s the only reason a trial happens at all. Crump is one of the lawyers for the family of Ahmaud Arbery, the black jogger who was killed by two white men in Georgia, in February. It was only after a video of the shooting went viral that the two men were arrested, seventy-four days after the murder. But, when an entire nation is out for blood, prosecutors can feel pressured to overcharge defendants. (After George Zimmerman’s trial, legal analysts said that if the prosecutors had pursued a charge of manslaughter, rather than the more serious one of second-degree murder, they would have been more likely to secure a conviction.)

In the past couple of weeks, the charges against the cops who killed George Floyd have been elevated. Chauvin was initially charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter, but prosecutors then added a charge of second-degree murder. (The other three officers now face charges of aiding and abetting second-degree murder and manslaughter.) The elevated charges could add up to an extra thirty years in prison, but, according to Rachel Barkow, a criminal-law professor and a vice-dean at the N.Y.U. School of Law, they could make conviction much trickier. “It is absolutely the case that it’ll be harder to win on the second-degree-murder theory than it would be on third-degree,” she said. “We’re talking about it now, in the middle of nationwide protests and the horror of the video, but these cases go to juries, and there they become a bit more complicated.”

Crump is calling for the charges to be upped once again, to first-degree murder. This would mean proving beyond a reasonable doubt that the murder of George Floyd was premeditated. “We think that it can be proved,” Crump said. “We think that there was intent. When the officer says, on the body-cam audio, ‘He doesn’t have a pulse, we should turn him on his side,’ and Chauvin says, ‘Nope, we keep him in this position,’ Chauvin is literally telling them, ‘I intend to cause serious

bodily harm to him.’ That’s premeditated murder.”

If convicted, Chauvin would get life in prison. Kami Chavis, a professor of law and the director of the criminal-justice program at Wake Forest University School of Law, in North Carolina, said that this drive for a first-degree charge likely stems from “years of seeing black lives treated like they don’t matter.” Still, she said, “when I look at the evidence we have at this point, I believe that second-degree murder is appropriate.” Even the Internet mob is asking Crump to stand down. “We are all literally begging you to keep the charges at 2nd degree so there’s actually a conviction,” @OliviaGrace_ tweeted.

Asked about these critiques, Crump said, “If this was a black person who did it, nobody would be questioning whether it’s first-degree murder. So we’re saying charge him to the full extent of the law.”

How does Crump end up on so many high-profile police-violence cases? “There aren’t many options for black people when they get killed by the police,” he explained. “What are you gonna do? Turn to the police? They’re the ones who killed you.” A couple of months before George Floyd was murdered, Breonna Taylor, a young E.M.T. in Louisville, Kentucky, was shot at least eight times by the police during a raid at her home. The cops who killed Taylor haven’t been arrested. They haven’t even been fired. But Crump’s working on it. “We’ve already filed the lawsuit,” he said.

—Tyler Foggatt

TUNING IN TESTIMONY



Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the New York City Council has held its public hearings remotely, via video. Last week, its committee on public safety convened online, after days of protests against police brutality, to consider a series of amendments to the city’s administrative code. One proposed new rule would make choke holds a misdemeanor; another would codify citizens’ rights to

record police activity. The meeting also offered residents their first opportunity, since the protests began, to testify about their experiences with police in front of a government body with the power to regulate.

"Today, we are going to remind the New York City Police Department that they work for us," Donovan Richards, the chair of the committee, said. He represents a district in Queens where more than a thousand people have died of COVID-19. He sat in front of photographs of Muhammad Ali and Martin Luther King, Jr., and a poster that featured his own picture under the words "Reading Takes You Places." Richards said that he was first stopped and frisked at the age of thirteen. He pointed out that the N.Y.P.D. commissioner, Dermot Shea, had sent his deputy, Benjamin Tucker, who is black, to the hearing. Richards said, "Commissioner Shea had an opportunity to answer for the actions of the department in the middle of a major crisis over the history of racialized brutality in the city, and he sends the black man who didn't get the job. That's just shameful." He addressed Tucker: "You shouldn't have to answer for him."

Tucker read a written response. He called the death of George Floyd, at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, "an atrocity . . . and deeply damaging to police-community relations here in New York and everywhere in our nation." He also spoke about some of the proposed amendments. Making choke holds a misdemeanor, he said, would "criminalize the rendering of C.P.R., chest com-

pressions, or the Heimlich maneuver."

Several dozen citizens had joined the hearing remotely. When their microphones were finally unmuted, each participant was given three minutes to speak. "I am here because, clearly, the N.Y.P.D. have been allowed to get away with literal murder for almost a decade," a woman named Jessica New said. She added, in an exasperated tone, "I also see that the police are now off of this call, which is not ideal."

The testimonies continued for the next five hours. Jillian Primiano, who works as an emergency-room nurse in Bushwick, testified from her couch, wearing blue scrubs, about a June 4th protest in the Bronx, where marchers were kettled by police before curfew and arrested once the clock struck eight. "I am for the abolition of all armed racist gangs in this country," she said. "Especially the N.Y.P.D." She rattled off a list of what she had seen during the protests: head injuries, seizures, broken knees and legs, and atrial fibrillations. She contradicted Tucker's assertion that arrested protesters had access to soap and water and masks in jail. "They did not give me a mask," she said. "There was no soap and water."

People called for the resignations of Commissioner Shea and Mayor Bill de Blasio. "We don't feel like there's anybody else in this city we can talk to right now," a man named John Farnsworth told the council. "It feels like the whole world has gone insane and we've got militarized police on our streets that don't answer to anyone."

Charlie Monlouis-Anderle, a doula, a breastfeeding counsellor, and a professional chef from Crown Heights, had their arm in a sling. "My arm was broken by the police on Wednesday night, June 3rd, during a peaceful protest," they said. "As they pinned my arms, legs, and head to the ground, my whole body went limp and my bladder released." (The police had lifted them up by their zip-tied arms, breaking the right one.) It took ninety minutes for them to receive medical attention.

Ziggy Leacock, of the South Bronx, reported that officers called protesters "pussies," like they were having a fight in high school." Eric Yue showed scabs from where zip ties had cut into his wrists. He described an officer saying,

as he was arrested, "Look at him shaking like a little bitch."

After Jess La Bombalera, of East Harlem, called out "all these white New Yorkers who waited for hours with us to be able to speak, and then did not yield their time to black and brown indigenous New Yorkers," a few of the white participants gave up their place in line. Eventually, even Councilman Richards seemed to tire of hearing from New Yorkers who were new to protesting police brutality. "You're addressing a black chair who lives in southeast Queens, in Far Rockaway," he said. "We don't need to be lectured."

—Emily Witt

THIS IS AMERICA SO BRUTAL A DEATH



I was twenty when Yusuf K. Hawkins, a sixteen-year-old African-American man, was attacked by a mob of about thirty white teen-agers armed with baseball bats and then shot to death, on August 23, 1989, in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. Hawkins had gone to the predominantly white neighborhood to buy a car. In the days and weeks following his death, there were marches, led by the Reverend Al Sharpton and a coalition of civil-rights organizations, through the neighborhood where Hawkins was killed.

At the time of Hawkins's murder, I had been in the United States for only eight years. Having spent my childhood living under a ruthless dictatorship in Haiti and being constantly reminded to avoid the wrath of soldiers and henchmen, I was already haunted by stories of beatings, torture, and extrajudicial killings. This was, in part, why I went to a massive protest in downtown Brooklyn a week after the murder. The march, called A Day of Outrage and Mourning, was attended by more than seven thousand people. I took my teen-age brothers with me, and I remember fearing—as we marched down Flat-



bush Avenue, shouting, “No justice, no peace”—that one day I might be chanting for them.

We came close on August 9, 1997, when a family friend, Abner Louima, in a case of mistaken identity, was arrested outside a Brooklyn night club, then pummelled with the fists, radios, flashlights, and nightsticks of several police officers, then sexually assaulted with a wooden broom handle inside a precinct bathroom. Some black immigrant parents harbor the illusion that if their émigré and U.S.-born children are the most polite, the best dressed, and the hardest working in school, they might somehow escape the brunt of systemic racism. But the myth of the good immigrant as exempt from police assault and murder kept getting shattered around us. By the February 4, 1999, killing of Amadou Diallo, a twenty-three-year-old Guinean, slaughtered on his doorstep by nineteen of the forty-one police bullets aimed at him as he reached for his wallet; by the March 16, 2000, shooting of Patrick Dorismond, the twenty-six-year-old son of Haitian immigrants, by undercover officers.

Thousands of people, in the United States and around the world, have had their own awakenings—from joining protests to becoming part of movements—after watching the on-camera

asphyxiation of George Floyd, his neck crushed beneath the bent knee of Derek Chauvin for nearly nine minutes, as two other officers dug their knees into Floyd’s back. It is the stuff of many African-American families’ worst nightmares, a public torture and execution by uniformed representatives of the state, who seem equally unconcerned about the life they’re extinguishing and the consequences they appear certain they will never face. It is also the type of thing that many immigrants thought they were leaving behind when they moved here.

Describing the reaction of some of Minnesota’s Somali refugees to the sadistic killing of Floyd, Fartun Weli, the executive director of Isuroon—a nonprofit organization that supports Somali families—told the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, “They were like, ‘We can’t believe it. This is America.’”

At the same time, the image of these police officers squeezing the life out of Floyd might serve as a metaphor for the way U.S. Administrations have, for generations, dealt with the countries many of us come from—through invasions, occupations, wars, the buttressing of dictators, and the removal of democratically elected governments, among other tactics. In the agony of his final moments, while crying out for his mama, water, and

breath, George Floyd reached out to and became all of us. He has joined a vast community of people, across the globe, who see echoes of the injustices and the inequalities of their own societies in his American story, and recognize their own torment in his suffering. Floyd’s seemingly unending death, in the midst of a pandemic that has disproportionately killed black, brown, and indigenous people, also underscores the fact that many of us are mourning, and are uncertain about how long we ourselves will be able to breathe.

In images of the solidarity protests from more than fifty countries around the world—Syria, Brazil, Australia, South Africa—people march, chanting, “No justice, no peace” and “Black lives matter.” George Floyd’s name is not the only one being called. The names of their own Breonna Taylors, Ahmaud Arberys, Sandra Blands, and Trayvon Martins also ring out, as part of a long and growing list. “It’s always the same story. Only the names change” read a cardboard sign held up by a protester in Paris.

Another sign reads “STOP KILLING US.” This “us” has grown exponentially and has become more vocal and more visible than George Floyd or his killers could have ever imagined.

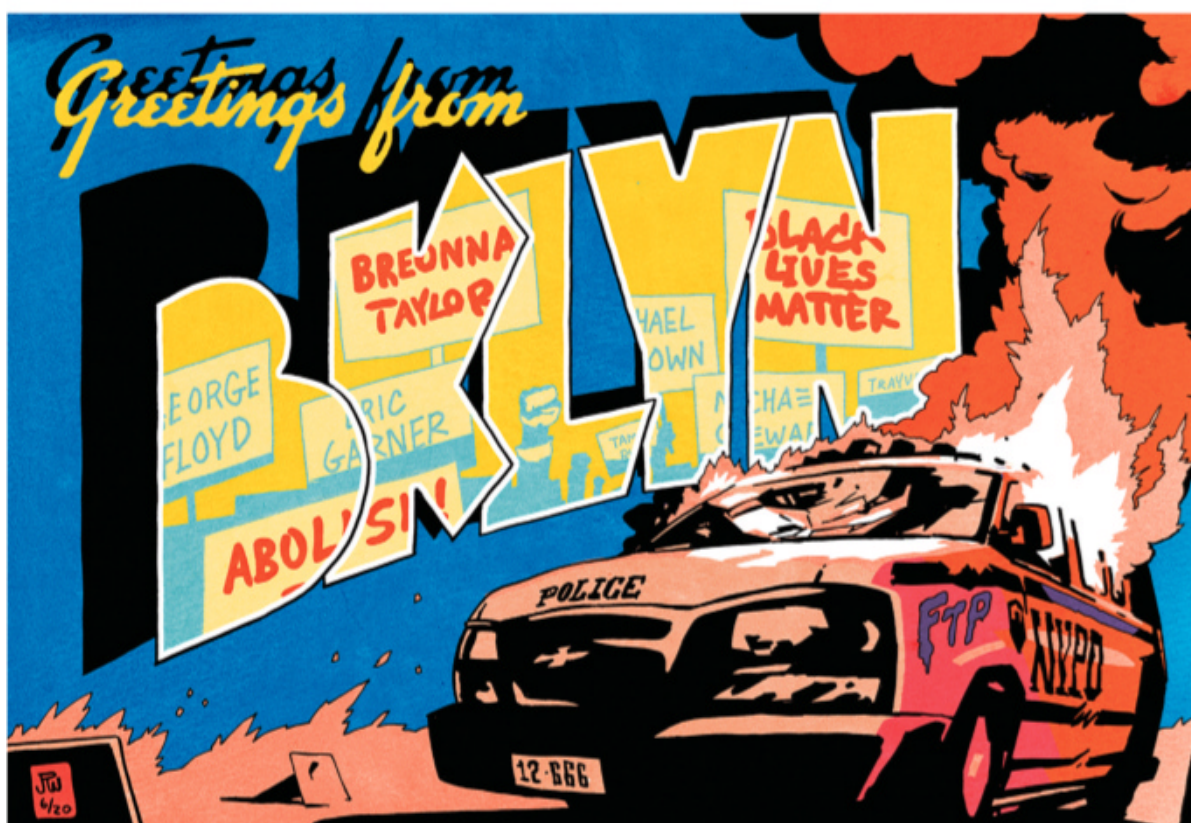
At recent rallies and protests near my home, in Miami, in addition to cries for justice for George Floyd and other victims of police and vigilante murder, I have observed spoken-word recitals, calls to defund the police and to end mass incarceration, and pleas for people to go out and vote. I have also heard music, drumming, and political hip-hop blasting from cars trailing the crowds. At times, also playing in the back of my mind are the words of the Miami-based poet and activist Aja Monet, from her poem “#sayhername”:

I am not here to say look at me how I died
so brutal a death I deserve a name to fit all
the horror in

I am here to tell you how if they mentioned
me
in their protest and their rallies
they would have to face their role in it too
my beauty too

—Edwidge Danticat

SKETCHPAD BY RONALD WIMBERLY



THE TRAYVON GENERATION

For Solo, Simon, Robel, Maurice, Cameron, and Sekou.

BY ELIZABETH ALEXANDER



BLUE BLACK BOY

This one was shot in his grandmother's yard. This one was carrying a bag of Skittles. This one was playing with a toy gun in front of a gazebo. Black girl in bright bikini. Black boy holding cell phone. This one danced like a marionette as he was shot down in a Chicago intersection. The words, the names: Trayvon, Laquan, bikini, gazebo, loosies, Skittles, two seconds, I can't breathe, traffic stop, dashboard cam, sixteen times. His dead body lay in the street in the August heat for four hours.

He was jogging, was hunted down, cornered by a pickup truck, and shot three times. One of the men who murdered him leaned over his dead body and was heard to say, "Fucking nigger."

I can't breathe, again. Eight minutes and forty-six seconds of a knee and full

weight on his neck. "I can't breathe" and, then, "Mama!" George Floyd cried. George Floyd cried, "Mama . . . I'm through!"

His mother had been dead for two years when George Floyd called out for her as he was being lynched. Lynching is defined as a killing committed by a mob. I call the four police officers who arrested him a mob.

The kids got shot and the grownups got shot. Which is to say, the kids watched their peers shot down and their parents' generation get gunned down and beat down and terrorized as well. The agglomerating spectacle continues. Here are a few we know less well: Danny Ray Thomas. Johnnie Jermaine Rush. Nania Cain. Dejuan Hall. Atatiana Jef-

erson. Demetrius Bryan Hollins. Jacqueline Craig and her children. And then the iconic: Alton Sterling. Eric Garner. Sandra Bland. Walter Scott. Breonna Taylor. Philando Castile.

Sandra Bland filmed the prelude to her death. The policeman thrust a stun gun in her face and said, "I will light you up."

I call the young people who grew up in the past twenty-five years the Trayvon Generation. They always knew these stories. These stories formed their world view. These stories helped instruct young African-Americans about their embodiment and their vulnerability. The stories were primers in fear and futility. The stories were the ground soil of their rage. These stories instructed them that anti-black hatred and violence were never far.

They watched these violations up close and on their cell phones, so many times over. They watched them in near-real time. They watched them crisscrossed and concentrated. They watched them on the school bus. They watched them under the covers at night. They watched them often outside of the presence of adults who loved them and were charged with keeping them safe in body and soul.

This is the generation of my sons, now twenty-two and twenty years old, and their friends who are also children to me, and the university students I have taught and mentored and loved. And this is also the generation of Darnella Frazier, the seventeen-year-old Minneapolis girl who came upon George Floyd's murder in progress while on an everyday run to the corner store on May 25th, filmed it on her phone, and posted it to her Facebook page at 1:46 A.M., with the caption "They killed him right in front of cup foods over south on 38th and Chicago!! No type of sympathy </3 </3 #POLICEBRUTALITY." When insideMPD.com (in an article that is no longer up) wrote, "Man Dies After Medical Incident During Police Interaction," Frazier posted at 3:10 A.M., "Medical incident??? Watch outttt they killed him and the proof is clearlyyyy there!!"

Darnella Frazier, seventeen years old, witnessing a murder in close proximity, making a record that would have worldwide impact, returned the following day to the scene of the crime. She possessed the language to say, precisely,

through tears, “It’s so traumatizing.”

In Toni Morrison’s “Sula,” which is set across the bleak black stretch of Ohio after the First World War, the character Hannah plaintively asks her mother, Eva Peace, “Mamma, did you ever love us?” To paraphrase Eva Peace’s reply: *Love you? Love you? I kept you alive.*

I believed I could keep my sons alive by loving them, believed in the magical powers of complete adoration and a love ethic that would permeate their lives. My love was armor when they were small. My love was armor when their father died of a heart attack when they were twelve and thirteen. “They think black men only die when they get shot,” my older son said in the aftermath. My love was armor when that same year our community’s block watch sent e-mails warning residents about “two black kids on bikes” and praising neighbors who had called the police on them. My love for my children said, *Move*. My love said, *Follow your sons*, when they ran into the dark streets of New York to join protesters after Eric Garner’s killer was acquitted. When my sons were in high school and pictures of Philando Castile were on the front page of the *Times*, I wanted to burn all the newspapers so they would not see the gun coming in the window, the blood on Castile’s T-shirt, the terror in his partner’s face, and the eyes of his witnessing baby girl. But I was too late, too late generationally, because they were not looking at the newspaper; they were looking at their phones, where the image was a house of mirrors straight to Hell.

My love was both rational and fantastical. Can I protect my sons from being demonized? Can I keep them from moving free? But they must be able to move as free as wind! If I listen to their fears, will I comfort them? If I share my fears, will I frighten them? Will racism and fear disable them? If we ignore it all, will it go away? Will dealing with race fill their minds like stones and block them from thinking of a million other things? Let’s be clear about what motherhood is. A being comes onto this earth and you are charged with keeping it alive. It dies if you do not tend it. It is as simple as that. No matter how intellectual and multi-colored motherhood becomes as children grow older, the part that says *My*

purpose on earth is to keep you alive has never totally dissipated. Magical thinking on all sides.

I want my children—all of them—to thrive, to be fully alive. How do we measure what that means? What does it mean for our young people to be “black alive and looking back at you,” as June Jordan puts it in her poem “Who Look at Me”? How to access the sources of strength that transcend this American nightmare of racism and racist violence? What does it mean to be a lucky mother, when so many of my sisters have had their children taken from them by this hatred? The painter Titus Kaphar’s recent *Time* magazine cover portrays a black mother cradling what should be her child across the middle of her body, but the child is literally cut out of the canvas and cut out of the mother, leaving a gaping wound for an unending grief that has made a sisterhood of countless black women for generations.

My sons were both a little shy outside of our home when they were growing up. They were quiet and observant, like their father, who had come to this country as a refugee from Eritrea: African observant, immigrant observant, missing nothing. I’ve watched them over the years with their friends, doing dances now outmoded with names I persist in loving—Nae Nae, Hit Dem Folks—and talking about things I didn’t teach them and reading books I haven’t read and taking positions I don’t necessarily hold, and I marvel. They are grown young men. With their friends, they talk about the pressure to succeed, to have a strong public face, to excel. They talk their big talk, they talk their hilarity, and they talk their fear. When I am with them, I truly believe the kids are all right and will save us.

But I worry about this generation of young black people and depression. I have a keen eye—what Gwendolyn Brooks called “gobbling mother-eye”—for these young people, sons and friends and students whom I love and encourage and welcome into my home, keep in touch with and check in on. How are you, how are you, how are you. How are you, baby, how are you. I am interested in the vision of television shows like “Atlanta” and “Insecure,” about which I have been asking every young person who will listen, “Don’t you think they’re about

low-grade, undiagnosed depression and not black hipster ennui?” Why, in fact, did Earn drop out of Princeton? Why does Van get high before a drug test? Why does Issa keep blowing up her life? This season, “Insecure” deals directly with the question of young black people and mental-health issues: Molly is in and out of therapy, and we learn that Nathan, a.k.a. LyftBae, who was ghosting Issa, has been dealing with bipolar disorder. The work of the creative icon of their generation often brings me to the question: Why is Kendrick so sad? He has been frank about his depression and suicidal thoughts. It isn’t just the spectre of race-based violence and death that hangs over these young people. It’s that compounded with the constant display of inequity that has most recently been laid bare in the COVID-19 pandemic, with racial health disparities that are shocking even to those of us inured to our disproportionate suffering.

Black creativity emerges from long lines of innovative responses to the death and violence that plague our communities. “Not a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief,” Toni Morrison wrote in “Beloved,” and I am interested in creative emergences from that ineluctable fact.

There are so many visual artists responding to this changing same: Henry Taylor, Michael Rakowitz, Ja’Tovia Gary, Carrie Mae Weems, Lauren Woods, Alexandra Bell, Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter, Steffani Jemison, Kerry James Marshall, Titus Kaphar. To pause at one work: Dread Scott’s “A Man Was Lynched by Police Yesterday,” which he made in the wake of the police shooting of Walter Scott, in 2015, echoes the flag reading “A man was lynched yesterday” that the N.A.A.C.P. flew outside its New York headquarters between 1920 and 1938 to mark the lynchings of black people in the United States.

I want to turn to three short films that address the Trayvon Generation with particular power: Flying Lotus’s “Until the Quiet Comes” (2012); his “Never Catch Me,” with Kendrick Lamar (2014); and Lamar’s “Alright” (2015).

In “Until the Quiet Comes,” the director, Kahlil Joseph, moves us through black Los Angeles—Watts, to be specific. In the fiction of the video, a boy stands

in an empty swimming pool, pointing his finger as a gun and shooting. The bullet ricochets off the wall of the pool and he drops as it appears to hit him. The boy lies in a wide-arc'd swath of his blood, a portrait in the empty pool. He is another black boy down, another body of the traumatized community.

In an eerie twilight, we move into the densely populated Nickerson Gardens, where a young man, played by the dancer Storyboard P, lies dead. Then he rises, and begins a startling dance of resurrection, perhaps coming back to life. The community seems numb, oblivious of his rebirth. That rebirth is brief; he gets into a low-rider car, that L.A. icon. The car drives off after his final death dance, taking him from this life to the other side. His death is consecrated by his performance, a ritual that the sudden dead are not afforded. The car becomes a hearse, a space of ritual transport into the next life. But the young man is still gone.

What does it mean to be able to bring together the naturalistic and the visionary, to imagine community as capable of reanimating even its most hopeless and anesthetized members? What does it mean for a presumably murdered black body to come to life in his community in a dance idiom that is uniquely part of black culture and youth culture, all of that power channelled into a lifting?

A sibling to Joseph's work is Hiro Murai's video for Flying Lotus's "Never Catch Me." It opens at a funeral for two children, a black boy and girl, who lie heartbreak-beautiful in their open caskets. Their community grieves inconsolably in the church. The scene is one of profound mourning.

And then the children open their eyes and climb out of their caskets. They dance explosively in front of the pulpit before running down the aisle and out of the church. The mourners cannot see this resurrection, for it is a fantasia. The kids dance another dance of black L.A., the force of black bodily creativity, that expressive life source born of violence and violation that have upturned the world for generations. The resurrected babies dance with a pumping force. But the community's grief is unmitigated, because, once again, this is a dreamscape. The children spring out into the light and climb into a car—no, it is a hearse—

and, smiling with the joy of mischievous escapees, drive away. Kids are not allowed to drive; kids are not allowed to die.

What does it mean for a black boy to fly, to dream of flying and transcending? To imagine his vincible body all-powerful, a body that in this society is so often consumed as a money-maker and an object of perverse desire, perceived to have superhuman and thus threatening powers? In the video for Kendrick Lamar's "Alright," directed by Colin Tilley, Lamar flies through the California city streets, above sidewalks and empty lots, alongside wire fences.

"Alright" has been the anthem of many protests against racism and police violence and unjust treatment. Lamar embodies the energy and the message of the resonant phrase "black lives matter," which Patrice Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi catapulted into circulation when, in 2013, they founded the movement. The phrase was apt then and now. Its coinage feels both ancestral in its knowledge and prophetic in its ongoing necessity. I know now with certainty that there will never be a moment when we will not need to say it, not in my lifetime, and not in the lifetime of the Trayvon Generation.

The young black man flying in Lamar's video is joyful and defiant, rising above the streets that might claim him, his body liberated and autonomous. At the end of the video, a police officer raises a finger to the young man in the sky and mimes pulling the trigger. The wounded young man falls, slowly—another brother down—and lands. The gun was a finger; the flying young man appears safe. He does not get up. But in the final image of this dream he opens his eyes and smiles. For a moment, he has not been killed.

Black celebration is a village practice that has brought us together in protest and ecstasy around the globe and across time. Community is a mighty life force for self-care and survival. But it does not protect against murder. Dance itself will not free us. We continue to struggle against hatred and violence. I believe that this generation is more vulnerable, and more traumatized, than the last. I think of Frederick Douglass's words upon hearing slaves singing their sorrow songs in the fields. He laid waste to the nascent myth of the happy darcy:

"Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy." Our dancing is our pleasure but perhaps it is also our sorrow song.

My sons love to dance. I have raised them to young adulthood. They are beautiful. They are funny. They are strong. They are fascinating. They are kind. They are joyful in friendship and community. They are righteous and smart in their politics. They are learning. They are loving. They are mighty and alive.

I recall many sweaty summer parties with family friends where the grown-ups regularly acted up on the dance floor and the kids d.j.'d to see how quickly they could make their old-school parents and play-uncles and aunties holler "Aaaaayyyy! That's my jam!" They watched us with deep amusement. But they would dance, too. One of the aunts glimpsed my sons around the corner in the next room and said, "Oh, my God, they can dance! They've been holding out on us, acting all shy!"

When I told a sister-friend that my older son, during his freshman year in college, was often the one controlling the aux cord, dancing and dancing and dancing, she said, "Remember, people dance when they are joyful."

Yes, I am saying I measure my success as a mother of black boys in part by the fact that I have sons who love to dance, who dance in community, who dance till their powerful bodies sweat, who dance and laugh, who dance and shout. Who are able—in the midst of their studying and organizing, their fear, their rage, their protesting, their vulnerability, their missteps and triumphs, their knowledge that they must fight the hydra-headed monster of racism and racial violence that we were not able to cauterize—to find the joy and the power of communal self-expression.

This essay is not a celebration, nor is it an elegy.

We are no longer enslaved. Langston Hughes wrote that we must stand atop the racial mountain, "free within ourselves," and I pray that those words have meaning for our young people. But our freedom must be seized and reasserted every day.

People dance to say, *I am alive and in my body.*

I am black alive and looking back at you. ♦



PRESIDENTIAL TROLLEY PROBLEMS

BY RIANE KONC

The Paint Job

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward five people. You can pull a lever and change the trolley's path so that it hits only one person, but you aren't aware of this option because you're too busy spray-painting "THE CHINESE TRAIN" on the side of the trolley.

Question: Will your approval rating go up by two percentage points, or by seven?

The Super-Shocking Surprise

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward five people. You can pull a lever and change the trolley's path so that it hits only one person. Technically, the trolley should be able to come to a stop long before a disaster occurs, but two years ago you cut the trolley's brakes.

Who could have seen this coming?

The Contingency Plan

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward five people. But there is a lever you can pull and change the trolley's path so that it hits only one.

Whom should you put in charge of pulling the lever? I mean, it's easy: the guy who doesn't believe in trolleys, right?

The Hero

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward millions of people. But has anybody thought about how, if you had dropped a nuclear bomb on the trol-

ley for no reason, many more lives would have been lost? You made the tough call; you said, "You know, let's not drop a nuclear bomb on the trolley for no reason."

Everyone keeps trying to change the subject with all this talk about a lever—but, in the meantime, no one says thank you. No one says thank you very much for not dropping a nuclear bomb on the trolley for no reason.

The Sacrificial Grandparent

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward a giant bag of money. You can pull a lever and change the trolley's path so that, instead of hitting the money, it hits a million grandmothers.

This should be simple: All people want to kill their grandmother, right? But if you kill your grandmother that means she won't be able to send you a five-dollar bill every year on your birthday and sometimes on Easter. So there's a lot to consider.

The Trolley Advisory

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward millions of people. The number could have been much smaller, but, until recently, you were loudly encouraging people to climb onto the tracks and speculating publicly about whether the trolley even existed. Still, if you act now, you can help thousands of people get off the tracks before the trolley arrives.

Why are so many of the people who

climbed onto the tracks now saying rude, nasty things like "Help! Help!"?

The Sneaky Doctor

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward two million people. You can pull a lever and change the trolley's path so that it hits only about a hundred thousand people.

Instead of thinking about pulling the lever, perhaps you could retweet a conspiracy theory that New York doctors are running a black market for ventilators?

The Cure Worse Than the Disease

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks toward millions of people. You can pull a lever that will save hundreds of thousands of lives. But there's a problem: the lever is greasy, and if you touch it not only will your hands get gunk on them but you'll also stain your shirt. And you like that shirt.

You hate to say it, but, in this case, could the solution be worse than the problem? And why hasn't anyone on the tracks complimented your nice, crisp shirt?

The Retirement Plan

There is a runaway trolley speeding down the tracks. If it continues on its path, it will run into millions of retirement funds. You can pull a lever and change the trolley's path so that it runs into millions of people instead, thank God.

This one is simple, so the only question is: Isn't it cool that you get to pull the lever and still call yourself "pro-life"?

The Conductor

A runaway trolley is speeding down the tracks toward millions of people. There is a lever that can be pulled to slow the trolley and save thousands of lives, but only the train conductor can pull it.

So, why is everyone screaming at you? Why do they keep yelling crazy things like "You're the conductor—do something!"? What? Just because you're wearing the conductor's uniform? Is it because you've been yelling for the entire train ride about how great it was that they gave you the train-conductor job and how you have probably set a record for train conducting, whatever that means?

How do you explain that you never wanted to actually do the work of conducting a train—and that you just wanted to wear the stupid hat? ♦

THE RIOT REPORT

What government commissions say about protests for racial justice.

BY JILL LEPORE

*Detroit, July 25, 1967. Thousands of U.S. troops were deployed to the city.*

On February 14, 1965, back from a trip to Los Angeles, and a week before he was killed in New York, Malcolm X gave a speech in Detroit. “Brothers and sisters, let me tell you, I spend my time out there in the street with people, all kind of people, listening to what they have to say,” he said. “And they’re dissatisfied, they’re disillusioned, they’re fed up, they’re getting to the point of frustration where they are beginning to feel: What do they have to lose?”

That summer, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. In a ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda attended by Martin Luther King, Jr., Johnson invoked the arrival of enslaved Africans in Jamestown, in 1619: “They came in darkness and they came in chains. And today we strike away the last major

shackles of those fierce and ancient bonds.” Five days later, Watts was swept by violence and flames, following a protest against police brutality. The authorities eventually arrested nearly four thousand people; thirty-four people died. “How is it possible, after all we’ve accomplished?” Johnson asked. “How could it be? Is the world topsy-turvy?”

Two years later, after thousands of police officers and National Guard troops blocked off fourteen square miles of Newark and nearly five thousand troops from the 82nd and the 101st Airborne were deployed to Detroit, where seven thousand people were arrested, Johnson convened a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, chaired by Illinois’s governor, Otto Kerner, Jr., and charged it with answering three questions: “What

happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again and again?” Johnson wanted to know why black people were still protesting, after Congress had finally passed landmark legislation, not only the Voting Rights Act but also the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and a raft of anti-poverty programs. Or maybe he really didn’t want to know why. When the Kerner Commission submitted its report, the President refused to acknowledge it.

There’s a limit to the relevance of the so-called race riots of the nineteen-sixties to the protests of the moment. But the tragedy is: they’re not irrelevant. Nor is the history that came before. The language changes, from “insurrection” to “uprising” to the bureaucratic “civil disorder,” terms used to describe everything from organized resistance to mayhem. But, nearly always, they leave a bloody trail in the historical record, in the form of government reports. The Kerner Report followed centuries of official and generally hysterical government inquiries into black rebellion, from the unhinged “A Journal of the proceedings in the Detection of the Conspiracy formed by some White People, in conjunction with Negro and other Slaves, for burning the City of New-York in America, and murdering the Inhabitants,” in 1744, to the largely fabricated “Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes, charged with an attempt to raise an insurrection in the state of South-Carolina,” in 1822. The white editor of the as-told-to (and highly dubious) “The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, Va. . . also, An Authentic Account of the Whole Insurrection, with Lists of the Whites Who Were Murdered . . .,” in 1831, wrote, “Public curiosity has been on the stretch to understand the origin and progress of this dreadful conspiracy, and the motives which influences its diabolical actors.” What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again and again?

After Reconstruction, Ida B. Wells, in “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases,” which appeared in 1892, turned the genre on its head, offering a report on white mobs attacking black men, a litany of lynchings. “Somebody must show that the Afro-Amer-

ican race is more sinned against than sinning, and it seems to have fallen upon me to do so," Wells wrote in the book's preface, after a mob burned the offices of her newspaper, the *Free Speech*. White mob violence against black people and their homes and businesses was the far more common variety of race riot, from the first rising of the K.K.K., after the Civil War, through the second, in 1915. And so the earliest twentieth-century commissions charged with investigating "race riots" reported on the riots of white mobs, beginning with the massacre in East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1917, in which, following labor unrest, as many as three thousand white men roamed the city, attacking, killing, and lynching black people, and burning their homes. Wells wrote that as many as a hundred and fifty men were killed, while police officers and National Guardsmen either looked on or joined in. Similar riots took place in 1919, in twenty-six cities, and the governor of Illinois appointed an interracial commission to investigate. "This is a tribunal constituted to get the facts and interpret them and to find a way out," he said.

The Chicago Commission on Race Relations, composed of six whites and six blacks, who engaged the work of as many as twenty-two whites and fifteen blacks, heard nearly two hundred witnesses, and, in 1922, published a seven-hundred-page report, with photographs, maps, and color plates: "The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot." It paid particular attention to racial antipathy: "Many white Americans, while technically recognizing Negroes as citizens, cannot bring themselves to feel that they should participate in government as freely as other citizens." Much of the report traces how the Great Migration brought large numbers of blacks from the Jim Crow South to Chicago, where they faced discrimination in housing and employment, and persecution at the hands of local police and the criminal-justice system:

The testimony of court officials before the Commission and its investigations indicate that Negroes are more commonly arrested, subjected to police identification, and convicted than white offenders, that on similar evidence they are generally held and convicted on more serious charges, and that they are given longer sentences. . . . These practices and tendencies are not only unfair to Negroes, but weaken

the machinery of justice and, when taken with the greater inability of Negroes to pay fines in addition to or in lieu of terms in jail, produce misleading statistics of Negro crime.

Very little came of the report. In 1935, following riots in Harlem, yet another hardworking commission weighed in:

This sudden breach of the public order was the result of a highly emotional situation among the colored people of Harlem, due in large part to the nervous strain of years of unemployment and insecurity. To this must be added their deep sense of wrong through discrimination against their employment in stores which live chiefly upon their purchases, discrimination against them in the school system and by the police, and all the evils due to dreadful overcrowding, unfair rentals and inadequate institutional care. It is probable that their justifiable pent-up feeling, that they were and are the victims of gross injustice and prejudice, would sooner or later have brought about an explosion.

Who was to blame?

The blame belongs to a society that tolerates inadequate and often wretched housing, inadequate and inefficient schools and other public facilities, unemployment, unduly high rents, the lack of recreation grounds, discrimination in industry and public utilities against colored people, brutality and lack of courtesy of the police.

In Detroit in 1943, after a riot left twenty-five blacks and nine whites dead and led to the arrest of nearly two thousand people, Michigan's governor appointed the commissioner of police and the attorney general to a panel that concluded, without conducting much of an investigation, that responsibility for the riots lay with black leaders, and defended the police, whom many had blamed for the violence. A separate, independent commission, led by Thurgood Marshall, then chief counsel for the N.A.A.C.P., conducted interviews, hired private detectives, and produced a report titled "The Gestapo in Detroit." The group called for a grand jury, arguing that "much of the blood spilled in the Detroit riot is on the hands of the Detroit police department." No further investigation took place, and no material reforms were implemented.

That's what usually happens. In a 1977 study, "Commission Politics: The Processing of Racial Crisis in America," Michael Lipsky and David J. Olson reported that, between 1917 and 1943, at least twenty-one commissions were

appointed to investigate race riots, and, however sincerely their members might have been interested in structural change, none of the commissions led to any. The point of a race-riot commission, Lipsky and Olson argue, is for the government that appoints it to appear to be doing something, while actually doing nothing.

The convulsions that led to the Kerner Commission began in Los Angeles, in 1965. Between 1960 and 1964, the nation enjoyed unrivalled prosperity, but in Watts, among the poorest neighborhoods of L.A., one in three men had no work. In Los Angeles, as Mike Davis and Jon Wiener write in a new book, "Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties," "the LAPD operated the nation's most successful negative employment scheme." Police stopped black men for little or no reason, and, if they talked back, they got arrested; left with an arrest record, they became unemployable.

On August 11, 1965, a Wednesday, a motorcycle cop pulled over a car with a driver and a passenger, two brothers, Ronald and Marquette Frye, about a block from their house, near 116th Street. Their mother, Rena, all of five feet tall, came over. Marquette resisted handcuffs—he would strike those fierce and ancient shackles. The motorcycle cop called for backup; twenty-six police vehicles raced to the scene, sirens screaming. "Does it take all these people to arrest three people?" an onlooker asked. When Rena Frye tried to stop the police from beating her sons with billy clubs, they pinned her to the hood of a patrol car and, after a crowd had gathered, arrested another of her sons and dragged away a woman in a stranglehold. "Goddam! They'd never treat a white woman like that!" someone called out. The crowd protested, and grew, and protested, and grew. What came to be known as the Watts riot lasted for six days and spread across nearly fifty square miles. On Friday night, a man said:

I was standing in a phone booth watching. A little kid came by carrying a lamp he had taken out of a store. Maybe he was about twelve. He was with his mother. I remember him saying: "Don't run Mommy. They said we could take the stuff because they're going to burn the store anyway." Then, suddenly, about five police cars stopped. There were about 20 cops in them and they all got out. One came up to

the booth I was standing in. The cop hit me on the leg with his club. "Get out of here, nigger," he yelled at me. I got out of the booth. Another cop ran up to the boy and hit him in the head with the butt of a shotgun. The kid dropped like a stone. The lamp crashed on the sidewalk. I ran out of the phone booth and grabbed the cop by the arm. I was trying to stop him from beating the boy. Two cops jumped on my back. Others struck the boy with their clubs. They beat that little kid's face to a bloody pulp. His mother and some others took him away. That's when I thought, white people are animals.

Johnson could barely speak about what was happening in Watts. An aide said, "He refused to look at the cable from Los Angeles describing the situation. He refused to take the calls from the generals who were requesting government planes to fly in the National Guard. . . . We needed decisions from him. But he simply wouldn't respond."

The same Friday, the National Guard arrived. "More Americans died fighting in Watts Saturday night than

in Vietnam that day," an observer wrote. On Sunday, fifteen police officers fired eleven shotgun rounds into Aubrey Griffith, inside his own house, where he and his wife had been in bed while their son, on leave from the Air Force, was watching TV. The officers banged on the door, and Griffith told his wife to call the police. An inquest ruled his death—and every other death at the hands of the National Guard or the police during the days of protest—a justifiable homicide.

Martin Luther King, Jr., arrived on Tuesday. "All we want is jobs," a man said to him, at a community meeting in Watts. "We get jobs, we don't bother nobody. We don't get no jobs, we'll tear up Los Angeles, period." Later, King recalled that one man told him, "We won!" King had replied, "What do you mean, 'We won'?" Thirty-some people dead, all but two are Negroes. You've destroyed your own. What do you mean, 'We won'?" The man said, "We made them pay attention to us."

Paying attention, at that point, only ever really took this form: the governor appointed a commission, this time headed by John A. McCone, a lavishly wealthy and well-connected California industrialist who, in 1961, had been made director of the C.I.A. by President Kennedy but had resigned in April, 1965, in part because he objected to Johnson's reluctance to engage in a wider war in Vietnam. The McCone Commission report, titled "Violence in the City," celebrated the City of Angels: "A Negro in Los Angeles has long been able to sit where he wants in a bus or a movie house, to shop where he wishes, to vote, and to use public facilities without discrimination. The opportunity to succeed is probably unequaled in any other major American city." It called for the creation of fifty thousand new jobs, but, first, "attitudinal training." It blamed the riots on outside agitators and civil-rights activists: "Although the Commission received much thoughtful and constructive testimony from Negro witnesses, we also heard statements of the most extreme and emotional nature. For the most part our study fails to support—and indeed the evidence disproves—most of the statements made by the extremists." Fundamental to the McCone thesis was the claim that peaceful demonstrations produce violent riots, and should therefore be discouraged. In a devastating rebuttal, Bayard Rustin laid this argument to waste:

It would be hard to frame a more insidiously equivocal statement of the Negro grievance concerning law enforcement during a period that included the release of the suspects in the murder of the three civil-rights workers in Mississippi, the failure to obtain convictions against the suspected murderers of Medgar Evers and Mrs. Violet Liuzzo . . . and the police violence in Selma, Alabama. . . . And surely it would have been more to the point to mention that throughout the nation Negro demonstrations have almost invariably been non-violent, and that the major influence on the Negro community of the civil-rights movement has been the strategy of discipline and dignity.

By the summer of 1967, when protests against police brutality had led to riots in Newark and Detroit, Johnson was facing a conservative backlash against his Great Society programs,



"Do you think you and Daddy might be brave enough to sleep in your own bed tonight?"

and especially against the Fair Housing Act, which was introduced in Congress in 1966. He'd also been trying to gain passage of a Rat Extermination Act, to get rid of urban infestations; Republicans called it the Civil Rats Bill. Johnson had long since lost the right; now he was losing the left. By April, King had come out against the war in Vietnam. Beleaguered and defensive, Johnson launched an "Optimism Campaign," in an effort to convince the public that the U.S. was winning the war in Vietnam. George Romney, the Republican governor of Michigan, who was expected to run against Johnson in 1968, asked for federal troops to be sent to Detroit, which would be the first time since F.D.R. sent them in 1943. Johnson wavered. "I'm concerned about the charge that we cannot kill enough people in Vietnam so we go out and shoot civilians in Detroit," he said. In the end, he decided to authorize the troops, and to blame Romney, announcing, on television, that there was "undisputed evidence that Governor Romney of Michigan and the local officials in Detroit have been unable to bring the situation under control." Twenty-seven hundred Army paratroopers were deployed to Detroit, with Huey helicopters that most Americans had seen only in TV coverage of the war in Vietnam.

On July 27, 1967, Johnson gave a televised speech on "civil disorders," announcing his decision to form a national commission to investigate race riots. Protests had taken place, and turned violent, in more than a hundred and fifty cities that summer, and they were being televised. Were they part of a conspiracy? Johnson suspected so, even though his advisers told him that he was wrong. "I don't want to foreclose the conspiracy theory now," he said. "Keep that door open."

Johnson loved Presidential commissions: people called him, not affectionately, "the great commissioner." In the first decade after the Second World War, U.S. Presidents appointed an average of one and a half commissions a year. Johnson appointed twenty. In "Separate and Unequal: The Kerner Commission and the Unraveling of American Liberalism" (2018), Steven M. Gillon observes that "commissions be-

came a convenient way for presidents to fill the gap between what they could deliver and what was expected of them." To his new commission, Johnson appointed a Noah's Ark of commissioners, two by two: two congressmen, one Republican, one Democrat; one business leader, one labor leader. Roy Wilkins, the executive director of the N.A.A.C.P., was, with Edward Brooke, a Republican senator from Massachusetts, one of two African-Americans. The commission included no political radicals, no protesters, and no young people. The President expected the commission to defend his legislative accomplishments and agenda, and to endorse his decision to send the National Guard to Detroit. When he called Fred Harris, the thirty-six-year-old Oklahoma senator, to discuss the appointment, he told Harris to remember that he was a "Johnson man." Otherwise, Johnson said, "I'll take out my pocket knife and cut your peter off." Nearly as soon as he convened the commission, Johnson regretted it, and pulled its funding.

Otto Kerner, born in Chicago in 1908, went to Brown and then Northwestern, for law school, and, in the nineteen-thirties and into the Second World War, served in the Illinois National Guard, for twenty years, retiring in 1954 with the rank of major general. Under his leadership, as Bill Barnhart and Gene Schlickman report in their biography, the Illinois guard had the nation's highest percentage of African-Americans. A former district attorney, later elected to a county judgeship, Kerner had a reputation for strict personal integrity, earning him the nickname Mr. Clean. He was elected governor of Illinois in 1960, and it is possible that his coat-tails delivered the state to John F. Kennedy, in one of the closest Presidential races in American history. He had a strong record on civil rights, and was an adamant supporter of fair housing, declaring, in 1968, "Civil disorders will still be the order of the day unless we create a society of equal justice."



After Kerner got the call from Johnson, he announced, "Tomorrow, I go to Washington to help organize this group of citizens for the saddest mission that any of us in our careers have been asked to pursue—why one American assaults another, why violence is inflicted on people of our cities, why the march to an ideal America has been interrupted by bloodshed and destruction. We are being asked, in a broad sense, to probe into the soul of America."

Kerner wanted open hearings. "My concern all the time about this commission has been that at the conclusion our greatest problem is going to be to educate the whites, rather than the Negro," he said.

Kerner did not prevail on this point. J. Edgar Hoover testified on the first day, to say that the F.B.I. had found no evidence of a conspiracy behind the riots, and that he thought one good remedy for violence would be better gun laws. "You have to license your dog," he said. Why not your gun? Martin Luther King, Jr., told the commission, "People who are completely devoid of hope don't riot."

Maybe the most painful testimony came from Kenneth B. Clark, the African-American psychologist, at the City College of New York, whose research on inequality had been pivotal to the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. He told the commission:

I read that report . . . of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission—it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland—with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.

The historical trail is blood spilled in a deeply rutted road.

John V. Lindsay, the handsome liberal mayor of New York who served as the vice-chair of the commission, got most of the media attention. But Kerner did his work. When the commission

travelled, Kerner went out on the street to talk to people. He went for a walk in Newark, and stopped to speak to a group around the corner from Prince Street. They told him they had three concerns: police brutality, unemployment, and the lack of a relocation program for displaced workers. One man told the Governor that he hadn't had a job in eight years.

After months of hearings and meetings, the commission began assembling its report. Kerner wanted it to be moving, and beautifully written. John Hersey was asked to write it, perhaps in the style of "Hiroshima"; Hersey said no. (Instead, much of the report was drafted by the commission's executive director, David Ginsburg, who later helped write Hubert Humphrey's campaign platform.) Toward the end of the commission's deliberations, Roy Wilkins offered emotional personal testimony that greatly informed a draft by Lindsay, describing "two societies, one black, one white." Another draft contained a passage that was later stricken: "Past efforts have not carried the commitment, will or resources needed to eliminate the attitudes and practices that have maintained racism as a major force in our society. Only the dedication of every citizen can gen-

erate a single American identity and a single American community." Every word of the report was read aloud, and every word was unanimously agreed on. The final draft did include this passage: "Race prejudice has shaped our history decisively; it now threatens to affect our future. White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II." In the final report, as the historian Julian Zelizer writes in an introduction to a 2016 edition, "no institution received more scrutiny than the police." That's been true of every one of these reports since 1917.

Johnson, when he got the report, was so mad that he refused to sign the letters thanking the commissioners for their service. "I'd be a hypocrite," he said. "Just file them . . . or get rid of them."

The Kerner Report was published on March 1, 1968, but first it was leaked (probably by Ginsburg) to the *Washington Post*, which ran a story with the headline "CHIEF BLAME FOR RIOTS PUT ON WHITE RACISM." It became an overnight best-seller. It sold more copies than the Warren Commission report, three-quarters of

a million copies in the first two weeks alone. Released in a paperback edition by Bantam, it was said to be the fastest-selling book since "Valley of the Dolls."

Civil-rights activists, expecting a whitewash, were stunned. "It's the first time whites have said, 'We're racists,'" the head of CORE declared. Republicans rejected it. "One of the major weaknesses of the President's commission is that it, in effect, blames everybody for the riots except the perpetrators of the riots," Nixon said from the campaign trail. "I think this talk . . . tends to divide people, to build a wall in between people." Conservatives deemed it absurd. "What caused the riots," William F. Buckley, Jr., wrote, "isn't segregation or poverty or frustration. What caused them is a psychological disorder which is tearing at the ethos of our society as a result of boredom, self-hatred, and the arrogant contention that all our shortcomings are the result of other people's aggressions upon us."

Johnson came up with his own explanation for what had happened in America during his Presidency: "I've moved the Negro from D+ to C-. He's still nowhere. He knows it. And that's why he's out in the streets. Hell, I'd be there, too." In 1969, Harry McPherson, Johnson's chief speechwriter, tried to explain what had so bothered Johnson about the Kerner Report. "It hurt his pride," McPherson said, because it made it clear that Johnson had not, somehow, saved the Negro. But there was a bigger, sounder reason, he believed: "The only thing that held any hope for the Negro was the continuation of the coalition between labor, Negroes, intellectuals, . . . big city bosses and political machines and some of the urban poor. . . . In other words, it required keeping the Polacks who work on the line at River Rouge in the ball park and supporting Walter Reuther and the government as they try to spend money on blacks." Middle-class whites didn't give a damn, he thought, but blacks needed poor and working-class whites on their side. "Then a Presidential commission is formed and goes out and comes back, and what does it say? Who's responsible for the riots? 'The other mem-



bers of the coalition. They did it. Those racists.' And thereupon, the coalition says . . . 'we'll go out and find ourselves a guy like George Wallace, or Richard Nixon.'"

That spring, Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed, and then Robert F. Kennedy. In July, five months after the release of the report, Kerner wrote his own reflections, looking back at the response to the maelstrom that had followed King's assassination, and arguing against the militarization of the police: "Armored vehicles, automatic weapons and armor-piercing machine guns are for use against an enemy, and not a lawbreaker. . . . If you come out with a show of force, you in a sense challenge the other side to meet you. Force begets force."

Still, Johnson fulfilled Kerner's wish to be appointed to the federal bench. During Kerner's confirmation hearings, he was questioned by Strom Thurmond about the conclusions of the report that bore his name:

Thurmond: Why do you say "white racism" caused these riots?

Kerner: I beg your pardon.

Thurmond: Why do you want to blame the white people . . . for this trouble?

Kerner: Because we say this has developed over a period of time, and the people in the Negro ghettos indicated that the rebellion was against the white establishment. . . .

Thurmond: . . . What does that term mean? What did you think it meant when you put it in this report or approved of it?

Kerner: I thought it meant this—that over a period of years the Negro was kept within a certain area economically and geographically and he was not allowed to come out of it.

In 1971, Kerner became involved in a scandal connected with his ownership of stock in a racetrack; he was eventually charged and convicted of mail fraud. Sentenced to three years in prison, Kerner went to the Federal Correctional Institution, a minimum-security prison in Fayette County, Kentucky, on July 29, 1974, two weeks before Nixon resigned. He insisted that his conviction was one of Nixon's "dirty tricks." "I have reason to believe I was one of the victims of this overall plan," he wrote. He suspected Nixon of punishing him for his role in Kennedy's victory in 1960. In his cell, Kerner kept a journal. "So frequently I sit here alone," he wrote, thinking thoughts



"It's just not the same without the shame."

that inmates have thought since the beginning of prisons:

I wonder of what use is our prison system—as I have often wondered when I was seeking an alternative to this inhuman manner of restraining those who have violated the law. The waste of man power—both by the restrainers and the one restrained. Removing the individual from the outside world really accomplishes nothing of a positive nature. The restraint builds up frustrations and a smothering of the will. It kills motivation and completely removes decision ability.

With an ailing heart and what was soon discovered to be lung cancer, Kerner was paroled after serving seven months. He spent what time he had left urging prison reform. He died in 1976. Not long before his death, asked about the Kerner Report, he said, "The basis for the report, I think, is as valid today as the day we sent it to the government printing office."

On June 1st, in Washington, D.C., police in riot gear cleared Lafayette Square of peaceful protesters, by force. ("Take off the riot gear, I don't see no riot here," protesters chanted.) The purpose was to allow President Trump to stride to St. John's Church, accompanied by the Attorney General

and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and be photographed holding a Bible. The next day, Ohio's Republican senator, Rob Portman, called for a national commission on race relations. "It would not be a commission to restate the problem but to focus on solutions and send a strong moral message that America must live up to the ideal that God created all of us as equal," Portman said. He suggested that it might be co-chaired by the former Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

The United States does not need one more commission, or one more report. A strong moral message? That message is being delivered by protesters every day, on street after street after street across the nation. *Stop killing us.* One day, these reports will lie archived, forgotten, irrelevant. Meanwhile, they pile up, an indictment, the stacked evidence of inertia. In the summer of 1968, the civil-rights leader Whitney Young published an essay titled "The Report That Died," writing, "The report is still there, it still reads well, but practically nothing is being done to follow its recommendations." It was as it had ever been. It is time for it to be something else. ♦

THE UPRISING

People who took to the streets for George Floyd are finding their lives—and their city—transformed.

BY LUKE MOGELSON

On June 1st, a week after the killing of George Floyd sparked a national uprising that touched every state, convulsed major cities, activated the National Guard, and sent President Donald Trump into a secure bunker underneath the White House, Terrence Floyd, George's younger brother, visited the intersection in South Minneapolis where his sibling had died. During the previous seven days, Thirty-eighth Street and Chicago Avenue had become the site of an uninterrupted public vigil, designated by signs and banners as "sacred ground." Barricades around the four surrounding blocks impeded traffic and law enforcement. The sidewalk outside the Cup Foods grocery store—where an employee had called the police after suspecting George Floyd of using a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill—was buried under bouquets, mementos, and homemade cards. Activists delivered speeches between the gas pumps at a filling station; messages in chalk—"FIGHT BACK," "STAY WOKE"—covered the street. Volunteers passed out food and water; there was barbecue, music, tailgating. A wide ring of flowers and candles circumscribed the intersection, delineating a kind of magic circle. Later that day, within the circle, a group of indigenous women would perform the Jingle Dress Dance—a healing ritual created by members of the Ojibwe tribe during the influenza pandemic of 1918.

Terrence Floyd, who lives in New York City, arrived with a security entourage in the afternoon. As he approached the entrance to Cup Foods, guided by supporters and swarmed by an international mob of photographers and camera crews, he paused to admire a vibrant mural: his brother's face, set inside a giant sunflower. In the background were the names of more than two dozen other black victims of police violence, including Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, and Freddie Gray. At the base

of the mural, among cardboard signs, stood jugs of milk, which is used to alleviate the effects of tear gas. A couple of nights earlier, the police had conducted a raid at the site, clearing out people in violation of a citywide curfew.

Eventually, Terrence reached the curb where two officers had pinned down George's back and legs and where a third officer, Derek Chauvin, had pressed his knee into George's neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds while George repeated "I can't breathe" at least sixteen times before his eyes closed and his pulse stopped. Terrence sat down on the pavement where someone had painted the white silhouette of a prostrate body, its hands manacled behind its back and angelic wings spreading from its shoulders. Bowing his head, he let out an anguished cry. He remained there for several minutes, then stood to address the crowd.

"I understand y'all upset," he said, using a megaphone. "But I doubt y'all half as upset as I am. So if I'm not over here wilding out—if I'm not over here blowing up stuff, if I'm not over here messing up my community—then what are y'all doing? *What are y'all doing?*" He went on, "Let's do this another way. Let's stop thinking that our voice don't matter, and vote. . . . That's how we're gonna hit 'em. . . . Let's switch it up, y'all. . . . Do this peacefully. *Please.*"

Terrence fell silent. Or almost silent. The megaphone amplified his exhalations. A reverend, standing at his side, rubbed Terrence's back, leaned over, and whispered in his ear, "Breathe. Breathe. Breathe. Breathe."

The protests that have proliferated across the country for the past two weeks have been both intimately specific and sweepingly ambitious, honoring a single human life while indicting a national history. In Minneapolis, they have also been about a city. The relationship between Minneapolis's law-enforcement

officials and its communities of color, though always plagued, deteriorated dramatically in the five years before Floyd's death. In 2015, a white officer shot and killed a twenty-four-year-old unarmed African-American man, Jamar Clark, in North Minneapolis. (Another officer on the scene claimed that Clark had tried to take his gun; witnesses said that Clark was already in handcuffs.) Activists from Black Lives Matter camped out in front of a precinct house for eighteen days, in snow and frigid temperatures. One night, a white man opened fire on them, wounding five. His trial, which ended with his conviction, revealed that he had a history of making racist comments. The police forcibly tore down the encampment, evicting the protesters and arresting eight of them; in the end, no charges were brought against the officer who killed Clark.

A year later, in a suburb of Saint Paul, a thirty-two-year-old black man named Philando Castile was shot by a policeman during a traffic stop for a broken tail-light, after stating that he was in possession of a firearm. Castile's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, and her infant daughter were in the car. Reynolds live-streamed the immediate aftermath of the shooting on Facebook. In the video, Castile, who was licensed to carry, sits at the wheel, blood spreading through his T-shirt, while Reynolds cries "Stay with me" and the officer continues to aim his gun through the window. Castile died on film; Reynolds was handcuffed and detained; the officer, Jeronimo Yanez, was charged with manslaughter but acquitted.

In 2018, in North Minneapolis, Thurman Blevins, a black father of three, was killed by two white officers. A body camera worn by one of them captured Blevins running away—apparently with a gun—while calling over his shoulder, "Please, don't shoot me! Leave me alone! Leave me alone!" Blevins was shot multiple



Simone Hunter, nineteen: "It's not just about George Floyd. It's about all the unseen shit, where we don't have the video."

times. The county prosecutor found “no basis to issue criminal charges against either officer.”

Thirty-eighth and Chicago is on the Southside of Minneapolis. African-Americans have been concentrated there and across town, on the Northside, ever since anti-black housing covenants, in the early twentieth century, prohibited them from buying homes elsewhere in the city. Subsequent infrastructure projects and redlining policies entrenched this de-facto segregation, diverting resources from the Northside and the Southside while perpetuating poverty by inhibiting African-Americans from obtaining mortgages and business loans. At the same time, predominantly white neighborhoods have grown progressively more affluent. Today, Minneapolis appears on lists of the “best places to live” even as its racial disparities rank among the worst in the country. The median annual income of black residents in the Twin Cities is less than half that of whites, and, though about seventy-five per cent of white families own their homes, only about a quarter of black families do. Unemployment is more than twice as high for black residents as it is for white residents.

Many people in Minneapolis believe that the police department both reflects and enforces these inequalities. In 1999,

a law requiring officers to live within the city limits was repealed, allowing suburbanites to join the force; now most officers are white, and few live in or come from the neighborhoods they police. (Chauvin lived in Oakdale, twenty miles from where he killed Floyd.) The black community makes up about a fifth of the city’s population; nevertheless, when officers there physically subdue people—for instance, by hitting or Tasing them—sixty per cent of the time the subjects are black. A 2015 investigation by the American Civil Liberties Union found that black people in Minneapolis were nearly nine times more likely than whites to be arrested for low-level offenses such as trespassing or public consumption of intoxicants. That year, the city finally did away with ordinances against “lurking” and “spitting,” which had been disproportionately applied against black residents. In 2007, five high-ranking black officers sued the department, alleging pervasive institutional racism, including death threats, signed “KKK,” that were sent to every black officer, through the departmental mail system. The city settled the lawsuit out of court.

Patterns of bias have been accompanied by a culture of impunity. An analysis by Reuters of nearly a decade of officer-misconduct claims in Minneap-

olis found that ninety per cent of them resulted in no consequences. Chauvin, the subject of at least seventeen complaints, was disciplined only once; another officer involved in Floyd’s death, Tou Thao, had at least six complaints filed against him, and was sued for police brutality after he allegedly beat up a black man who was in handcuffs. (The city paid twenty-five thousand dollars to settle the case.) The only Minneapolis officer in recent memory to have been sentenced to jail for killing someone is Mohamed Noor, a black man, who shot Justine Damond, a white woman.

City officials have cited the Minneapolis police union as an obstacle to accountability. The union’s president, Lieutenant Bob Kroll, was named in the 2007 discrimination suit, which claimed that he wore “a motorcycle jacket with a ‘White Power’ badge sewn onto it.” Kroll has called Black Lives Matter a “terrorist organization” and has promoted training officers in “killology” instead of in de-escalation techniques. “I’ve been involved in three shootings myself, and not one of them has bothered me,” he said, in April. “Maybe I’m different.”

Everyone I met who lived close to Thirty-eighth and Chicago viewed the police as an alien force of constant menace and harassment. A common objection was the default belligerence of officers—their tendency to initiate physical confrontations, often under bogus pretexts. “The cops have written so many false reports on people just because they wanted to whup somebody’s ass,” one black resident told me. “It’s pure hate. Sometimes they don’t even take you to jail. They’ll take you to an alley and beat the hell out of you. It’s insane here, and people are sick of it.” Another local, who had grown up ten minutes away from the intersection, said that any infraction, no matter how minor, risked inciting police brutality: “The way they conduct themselves for very insignificant situations is way, way beyond what’s necessary. At what point do the citizens of a community say ‘enough?’”

One of the people listening to Terrence Floyd speak was Simone Hunter, a short nineteen-year-old with red-rinsed hair; she lived on the Northside, but had become a fixture at Thirty-eighth and Chicago since George



“Make sure you can see how insignificant I am.”

Floyd was killed. Hunter told me that the infamous cell-phone video of the incident had filled her with anger and disgust. “I felt like I was going to throw up,” she said. Until then, Hunter had never attended a large-scale protest, but two days after Floyd’s death, when people gathered outside the police station in Minneapolis’s Third Precinct—Chauvin’s precinct—she joined them. A line of officers protected the building. Hunter, whose small stature can obscure her pugnacity, pushed her way to the front and furiously reproached them. “How would you feel if this was done to your sons and daughters?” she said. One officer pepper-sprayed her, at close range; another whacked her leg with a wooden baton, knocking her down. (The Minneapolis Police Department did not respond to requests for comment for this article.)

The next day, Hunter woke up with a large, dark bruise on her inner thigh. Her whole body burned—“like someone dipped me in VapoRub”—but she was eager to rejoin the protesters.

“It’s not just about George Floyd,” she told me. “It’s about all the unseen shit, where we *don’t* have the video.” Hunter had been removed from a difficult family situation when she was six, separated from siblings, and raised in a foster home. She had felt buffeted by an invisible, malign system her entire life, and, for her, the list of unseen shit was long. An unrelenting procession of encounters with racism had confirmed her station in a world that seemed organized against her. Recently, she said, the police had stopped and combatively interrogated her and a friend, also a black teenager, for driving with an air freshener hanging from the rearview mirror—technically a safety violation. “We’re used to it, but we shouldn’t be,” Hunter said.

At around 9:30 P.M. on Thursday, May 28th, the night after Hunter had been pepper-sprayed and beaten, Minneapolis’s mayor, Jacob Frey, ordered the beleaguered officers defending the Third Precinct to evacuate. Frey later explained that he had wanted to “prevent hand-to-hand combat.” The officers fled out the back of the station, on foot and in a convoy of vehicles, while protesters hurled rocks at them. A few hours later, Hunter returned to the area and was stunned by what she found: thousands

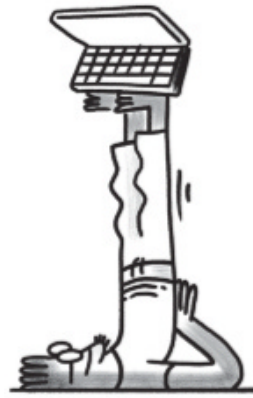
of raucous young people had congregated in the street, with no law enforcement in sight, and the station was on fire. Smoke billowed from the ground floor, and people were roaming the hazy second floor, tossing through the windows anything not bolted down: documents, folders, phones. A nearby post office was also ablaze. In the middle of the intersection, an upside-down mail truck burned. A second mail truck suddenly appeared and crashed head-on into the flaming steel. The driver jumped out, and people cheered. Cars spun doughnuts, motorcycles popped wheelies, fireworks and gunshots punctuated the mayhem; a liquor store had been broken into, then burned down, and alcohol circulated among the crowd. People in ski masks and bandannas wielded hammers and baseball bats.

Later, when I asked Hunter what it had felt like to see the Third Precinct overrun, she answered, “Like fucking therapy. It was amazing. It felt like ‘Finally, we’re attacking *them* instead of our own people. Finally, we’re not allowing ourselves to be threatened by them.’ It felt like victory. Like, *We can do this.*”

I’d arrived at the scene not long after she did. The atmosphere was an electric combination of the rage that had compelled people to battle the police and an astounded euphoria over having actually prevailed. But there was also something peculiar: some people, many of them white, seemed to be deriving an inordinate amount of pleasure from the spectacle. A white guy wearing board shorts and Apple earbuds, walking a bicycle, and sipping a bottle of malt liquor approached me to announce, in a slurred voice, “They keep giving me booze!” At a strip mall opposite the station, looters of all stripes had breached a Target, a Cub Foods supermarket, and a Dollar Tree. The Target had been nearly emptied; water from ceiling-mounted sprinklers rained down, and a fast-flowing stream carried debris into the parking lot. Several teen-agers emerged from the entrance, their pant cuffs rolled up, nude mannequins under their arms.

Hunter had graduated from high

school a year ago, and had recently been working at a Target distribution center, in Woodbury, just outside Saint Paul. From 7 A.M. to 6 P.M., she had stood at a conveyor belt, packaging merchandise to be shipped to retail outlets such as this one. Though Hunter did not participate in any vandalism, it didn’t bother her. In fact, she said, “it was very satisfying.” She viewed corporate capitalism as an integral component of structural racism in America, and working for Target had felt as demoralizing as shopping there—a capitulation to the same rigged game whose unfair rules were upheld by the police. But now everything had changed, and, Hunter realized, her life



would have to as well. She said to herself, “There’s no way I can come out here and support this and be O.K. with burning shit down and also go to my job and be, like, ‘This is fine. I’m cool with accepting money from these people.’ No. I can’t be cool with that.”

The damage wasn’t limited to big-box stores. Next to the Target, a charter school looked as if a bulldozer had plowed through it. Nearby, people holding metal pipes stood outside an apartment building. When a carful of young people pulled up, eying a tobacco shop on the ground floor, a thin, bearded man in reading glasses and a colorful button-down shirt told them that there was nothing to steal. “We got children here!” he yelled, waving at the upper floors.

His name was Said Maye. He was a long-haul truck driver and a refugee from Somalia. About seventy-five thousand Somalis live in Minnesota, more than anywhere else in the country. Many of them, like Maye, resettled there in the nineteen-nineties, during the Somali civil war. Maye said that more than a hundred families—some Somali, though not all—were living in Section 8 apartments above the retail spaces he was guarding. His concern was that someone might set the shops on fire, imperiling the building’s tenants. Although Maye had taken his wife, his mother, and his three children to his brother’s house, outside the city, he’d resolved to protect his neighbors until the tumult had subsided. When I met him, at



The vigil site became the hub of an organic, citywide mutual-aid campaign.

around 2 A.M., he'd been fending off looters for fifteen hours. Another man who'd volunteered to help said of Maye, "I've watched him stand in front of people pointing guns at his head. People were waving guns in his face, and he didn't move."

Maye turned up his palms and said, "I'm from Mogadishu—what do you want from me?"

As the night wore on, the looters focussed their attention on a block of small businesses up the road from the precinct house. Midori's Floating World Café had been trashed, and a group of locals who knew the restaurant's owners salvaged potted plants amid the rubble. "They didn't deserve this," William Tully, a twenty-five-year-old outreach-and-inclusion officer for the Democratic Party, said. "What is the point of destroying the community you're pro-

testing on behalf of?" One of Tully's friends, an immigrant from Mexico who asked to be identified only as Juan, pointed at a corner building engulfed in flames, in front of which a man posed for pictures. It had been a Latino-owned restaurant, and Juan's mother had once worked there. "These are not the real protesters," Juan said. "These are opportunists." Down the sidewalk, a white woman in a tank top and cutoff jeans used a fire extinguisher to smash the window of a barbershop.

A few minutes later, a car pulled over next to us, and a black man got out and started documenting the chaos with his cell phone. When someone in a mask told him to stop filming, the man wheeled around toward him: "This is my hood—I live here! I live fucking here!"

"I live here, too! Why you mad?"

"Everybody's mad right now!" the man shouted, incredulous. "We're *supposed* to be mad right now!"

Tully and Juan were convinced that most of the looters had come from outside Minneapolis for reasons having nothing to do with the killing of George Floyd. In the following days, politicians also seized on this idea. Minnesota's governor, Tim Walz, a Democrat, speculated, apparently without evidence, that eighty per cent of the people destroying property and attacking law enforcement were not residents of Minnesota. Walz attributed the rioting to "ideological extremists" pursuing a campaign of "international destabilization." Trump, for his part, blamed Antifa. In the city, rumors spread of white-supremacist infiltrators hoping to delegitimize the protests and white "accelerationists" attempting to instigate a race war.

Some people of this type do appear to have been present, and many looters unquestionably were white. On June 8th, the first arson charge for the Third Precinct fire was filed in federal court—against a twenty-three-year-old white man from Saint Paul. Of the demonstrators who have been arrested, however, none have been linked to anti-fascist groups, and few have been from out of state. Ascribing what happened in Minneapolis to murky external forces elides the profound grievances of its black community—grievances that, at least in the early days of the protests, were partly expressed through rioting. A day after the Third Precinct fell, Leslie Redmond, the president of the Minneapolis branch of the N.A.A.C.P., declared, "What you're witnessing in Minnesota is something that's been a long time coming. I can't tell you how many governors I've sat down with, how many mayors we've sat down with, and we've warned them that, if you keep murdering black people, this city will burn."

Chauvin was arrested, for third-degree murder, that same day. This appeased nobody. I was at Thirty-eighth and Chicago when the news was announced, and the reaction among the mourners there was disappointment about the charge, and indignation that the other officers involved had seemingly escaped punishment. A new chant arose: "One down, three to go!"

At dusk, throngs of people filled the street between the still smoking precinct house and the gutted Target. State troopers and National Guard units had cordoned off the area that morning but had since inexplicably withdrawn. Simone Hunter was back again. This time, she'd brought supplies: saline and milk, for treating tear gas; tampons and sanitary napkins, for packing flesh wounds. The precautions felt prudent. Trump had tweeted that the protesters were "THUGS," threatened to deploy the military to "get the job done right," and warned, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts."

Hunter was not alone in preparing for the possibility of violence. Some people arrived equipped with helmets, goggles, and sheet metal; others wore plywood shields strapped onto their forearms. A rusty van, marked with a cross of red tape, served as an ambulance—two teen-agers stood on its roof, making out. Near the station, in front of a burned Arby's, ramparts had been built with tables from Midori's Floating World Café. In the distance, the blue and red lights of squad cars flashed. The protesters faced them, crying out, "Say his name—George Floyd!" When the squad cars unexpectedly retreated, exultation gripped the crowd.

People began heading west on Lake Street, a long boulevard leading to another station, in the Fifth Precinct. The chants grew hostile: "Fuck the police!," "Who shuts shit down? We shut shit down!," and "We want freedom, freedom! All these racist-ass pigs, we don't need 'em, need 'em!" Nevertheless, the subsequent two-and-a-half-mile march was mostly celebratory. People piled onto the hoods of slow-moving cars, and residents waved from lawn chairs on the sidewalk, as if watching a parade.

The mood changed when the crowd reached the station, as night was falling. Two perimeters made of concrete barriers topped with tall fencing surrounded the building. Officers in helmets and gas masks stood on the roof, holding rubber-bullet guns. The protesters pressed against the fence, taunting the officers. At a Stop-N-Shop across the street, people with crowbars had removed plywood covering the entrance, and were hurrying out with cigarettes and snacks. "This is not why we're protesting!" a young woman

yelled. Another woman added, "Y'all need to fuck up the suburbs!" A middle-aged white man, wearing a motorcycle helmet with the face shield pulled down, ducked out of the store carrying bulk boxes of Advil and Tylenol.

The looting soon spread to an adjacent strip mall. For a surreal period, the people gathered outside the precinct house chanted and gave speeches while not fifty feet away other groups ransacked an Office Depot, a Kmart, and a Dollar Tree. Several protesters pleaded, "Keep it peaceful!" Chantaveia Burnett, one of the young women who had tried to defend the Stop-N-Shop, had given up rebuking the looters, and resigned herself to collecting loose bottles of water and stacking them in a neat pile. "People are probably going to need water," she explained.

By midnight, anyone looking to protest peacefully had left the scene. As a helicopter idled overhead, people taking cover behind a car wash launched bottles, bricks, and large mortar fireworks at the officers on the roof of the precinct house. Others broke into a Wells Fargo bank. In a room with overturned filing cabinets, smashed computers, and money-counting machines, two men, one white and one black, stood in front of a tall safe, arguing over a ring of keys that somebody had found. When it became clear that there was nothing inside to rob—or nothing left—a consensus rose in volume and vehemence: "Burn it down!" A black man vanished into the bank carrying a red can of gasoline; when he reappeared, the can was gone.

"We don't need money anymore!" someone shouted.

"We are the police now!" another added.

A teen-ager, wearing wraparound sunglasses with the price tag attached, stumbled past me. "Is this shit real?" he muttered. "Am I fucking dreaming?"

Ten minutes later, the flames leaping from the bank were bright enough to throw into relief the officers still standing on the precinct roof.

Simone Hunter watched the fire with what was becoming a familiar mixture of vindication and disbelief. "I can't lie—I was happy," she told me later. "If we need to make the world stop for people to pay attention to what's going on? Then we're gonna make the world stop."

Hunter's sentiment was shared by many of the protesters I met in Minneapolis. Although the vast majority of them had not committed any crimes, they recognized the political utility of such conduct. Nobody was killed, and neither law enforcement nor the military reported sustaining any injuries during the riots. Activists have argued that human life matters more than wealth and material objects, whose loss can never undermine the social compact as egregiously as the murder, by state agents, of black people. Property damage is therefore justifiable if it prevents such murders in the future. Whether or not you agree with that calculus, one thing seems indisputable: the uprising in Minneapolis has already resulted in meaningful change.

In addition to fixing the world's attention on the problems of police brutality and structural racism, the demonstrators in Minneapolis have succeeded in winning a number of concrete concessions that likely would not have been made under normal circumstances. The week after Floyd's murder, Minnesota's attorney general upgraded Derek Chauvin's charge to second-degree murder, and charged the other three officers with aiding and abetting him. Minneapolis's school board and its parks department severed ties with the police. The Minnesota Department of Human Rights launched an investigation into the police force and moved to ban its officers from using choke holds and neck restraints. Most remarkably, on June 7th, nine of the thirteen members of the City Council vowed to "begin the process of ending the Minneapolis Police Department." Although the practical import of this pledge remains vague, a radical overhaul of law enforcement in Minneapolis appears assured.

After decades of civil petitions for a reckoning with systemic racism, what finally achieved it was the issuance of an ultimatum—one with teeth. As the chant goes: no justice, no peace.

Simone Hunter, like many protesters, sees other positive consequences of the upheaval in Minneapolis. She told me that, though "there was always friction" among the city's communities of color—African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, various immigrant groups, and refugees—"this has broken all that

down.” Solidarity between the Somali-American and the African-American communities, in particular, has been galvanized by an urgent sense of common struggle that supersedes differences in history and culture. Somali-American women were ubiquitous at the protests. On June 6th, when Ilhan Omar, the Somali-born U.S. congresswoman who represents Minneapolis, spoke at a demonstration in town, she acknowledged, “I might not have been born in the United States. I might not have inherited the trauma and the tragedy that black Americans have who come from enslaved ancestry.” However, she said, the ordeal of racism had initiated her into the black-American experience: “I have lived as a black person in this country. I have lived as a mother raising black children.”

Nowhere has a sense of unity been more movingly on display than at Thirty-eighth and Chicago. At once a site of solemn mourning and of festive commemoration, the intersection drew more volunteers, artists, performers, and activists every day. The police had, for the most part, stayed away: buses and barriers sealed off a portion of the neighborhood, which was patrolled by residents, some armed. A medical tent was erected, and couches and lounge chairs were arranged under the canopy of the filling station opposite the Cup Foods. A stage, a d.j. table, and an industrial sound system were installed. A towering portrait of Floyd was mounted to a bus stop. Like an evolving art installation, the intersection was increasingly populated by statues and paintings. Visitors mingled, spoke, listened, danced, chanted, and prayed. Fresh bouquets piled up on top of desiccated ones. Pastors, priests, and imams gave sermons. You could sense the unprecedented extent to which Floyd’s death, compared with previous police killings of African-Americans, had unsettled white Americans. Soccer moms wept openly, old hippies burned sage, and white parents knelt with their children before the spot where Floyd was killed. Black parents brought their children as well, and it was impossible not to consider how the respective conversations would differ.

The vigil site also became the hub of an organic, citywide mutual-aid campaign. Many poorer residents had al-

ready been struggling because of lockdown measures related to COVID-19; shops that hadn’t already been shuttered by the pandemic were now damaged, or covered in plywood. Nearly every business on Lake Street, the primary commercial corridor for Latinos and Native Americans, was closed. So were the bus and light-rail lines, which meant that travelling outside the area to buy groceries was impossible for those without vehicles. At Thirty-eighth and Chicago, people had set up tables loaded with canned and boxed goods, fresh produce, diapers, toilet paper, kitchen supplies, homemade face masks, and other provisions, all piled around signs that read “FREE!” and “TAKE WHAT YOU NEED!” Near Cup Foods, the headquarters of a labor-rights organization called Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha had been converted into a food pantry, its offices swamped with donated items. A line of people snaked out the door, below the words “COMIDA GRATIS.”

Other spontaneous initiatives felt less revolutionary. The day after the rioting around the Fifth Precinct, hundreds of volunteers, most of them white, descended on the neighborhood to clean it up. Although some of them found useful tasks—one group filled garbage cans with water at nearby homes, wheeled them to the smoldering ruins of a small business, and formed a bucket line to douse the flames—others seemed primarily interested in being there, or



having been there. Most of the people I spoke to said that they had come out “to support the community.” Yet it was not altogether clear whether sweeping away the wreckage left behind by the protests amounted to an endorsement or a censure of them.

This ambiguity was most palpable—and uncomfortable—at the Wells Fargo, where a broken pipe spewed water into the scorched shell of the lobby. Dozens of young women used push brooms to

usher the ankle-deep water out of the building while men rescued desks and other furniture. Many of them were evangelicals from Saint Paul. “We’re trying to help in any way we can,” one said, a little breathlessly. The oldest person there was soaking wet and sweeping the water with visible urgency. When I asked him if he was with the church, he said, “What church?” and went on to explain that he was from Somalia. A safe-deposit box in the flooded basement contained the passports and birth certificates of his eleven children.

Although there is a robust network of activists in Minneapolis, the initial demonstrations there were improvised and leaderless, reminiscent of the Occupy movement in the U.S. and the *gilets jaunes* protests in France. Tony Williams, a member of Reclaim the Block, a local advocacy group, told me, “This uprising is not the product of any organizational strategy.” He added that many local activists had not participated at all. Williams, who had been part of the eighteen-day sit-in following the killing of Jamar Clark, in 2015, said that, after the five activists were shot, “a lot of us who were there walked away with a lot of trauma.” This time, rather than being physically on the ground, Williams and his colleagues focussed on channelling the public’s inchoate frustration into support for specific reforms.

The absence of hierarchy, and the need for direction, thrust many previously disengaged citizens into public and political life. On May 30th, while the church members worked to salvage what they could of the Wells Fargo, Governor Walz, having declared an 8 P.M. curfew in the Twin Cities the previous day, fully mobilized the Minnesota National Guard—“an action that has never been taken,” he noted. At 7:55 P.M., every cell phone in the city received an emergency alert: “Go home or to safe inside location. Avoid the outdoors. The curfew is enforceable by law.” When the message went out, I was sitting with Lisa Kargou, an immigrant from Liberia, amid thousands of protesters in the intersection between the bank and the Fifth Precinct house. I asked her if she planned to stay out past curfew, and she replied, “Hell yes.

I'm out here. I'm in it for good." Kargou had three sons, ages twelve, ten, and four. "I'm fighting for my kids," she said. "When they grow up to be men, I want them to be able to walk down the street without fear."

People took turns talking through a public-address system, and most of the speeches were more personal than political. If anyone was in charge, it seemed to be an African-American man in a long T-shirt with golden fringes, who had earlier scaled a street light and draped from it an enormous cloth tapestry bearing Floyd's image. When the emergency alert sent a ripple of apprehension through the crowd, the man grabbed the microphone and implored everyone to remain calm. "We gotta have some order, and we have to have decorum!" he said.

Given this projection of authority, I assumed that he was an experienced activist, or at least affiliated with an organization. In fact, it was the first protest he had ever attended. His name was Cornell Griffin, and he was thirty-nine years old; he lived with his wife in Maple Grove, northwest of the city. He'd worked as a mechanic, but for the past year and a half he had been depressed and living like a "recluse"—seldom leaving his basement and spending most of his time reading the Bible and posts on Facebook. He hadn't spoken to his extended family in months, and, when the protests began in Minneapolis, he'd felt no more desire to take part than he had after similar outrages. "I ain't gonna lie," he said. "When Trayvon Martin happened, Freddie Gray, I didn't do shit. Like, nothing." When Floyd was killed, Griffin's best friend tried to persuade him to join the protests, and for the first three days Griffin refused. Then, a few hours before I first saw him, he'd told himself, "Either I'm gonna live my life in fear, or I'm gonna try this one dang thing and see what comes of it." After Griffin offered to climb the street light, the group running the P.A. system started handing him the microphone. He found his voice, and realized that people in the crowd were looking to him for guidance.

After the emergency alert, a man on roller skates approached Griffin and told him that police officers, state troopers, and National Guard soldiers were



"I hope you didn't tip him for a cold pizza."

assembling nearby: the crackdown would be violent, and the ensuing panic could cause a stampede. The man proposed that Griffin lead away as many protesters as he could. Griffin took the microphone and announced that a march was currently departing. A large group began following him toward downtown.

Not long after, a phalanx of state troopers in riot gear unleashed rubber bullets, marking pellets, stun grenades, and tear gas on the remaining protesters—more than a thousand people, including children and senior citizens, all of them peaceful—then rushed them with batons. Following behind the assault was an armored tactical vehicle; from its open hatch, a trooper aimed an assault rifle with a silencer at people. Within minutes, the intersection had been cleared. Disoriented and bleeding protesters, and some journalists, staggered through the gas. Griffin's wife, who'd stayed behind, texted him, asking where he was, and he quickly headed back. Just outside the Fifth Precinct, he came upon a woman rooted to the ground, immobilized with fear. Griffin was attempting to get her to move when he spotted a nearby officer levelling a gun at them. A rubber bullet hit his neck.

When I met up again with Griffin, a few days later, his neck was still scabbed over where the round had broken the flesh, and his voice was raspy from the trauma to his throat and vocal cords. But he was in high spirits. The protest had shifted something into focus for him. "For the last year, I've been feeling like there's something wrong with

me," he said. "And then this happened. And, all of a sudden, it all made sense. It wasn't me. *My city* is hurting. *My city* is depressed. *My city* is on fire."

The manner in which law enforcement has responded to the demonstrations in Minneapolis has only intensified the resentment fuelling the demonstrations. Although no police officers are known to have been harmed by protesters, many protesters have been injured by the police. One man, Soren Stevenson, lost his left eye after being hit with a rubber bullet. The rioting lasted only a few days; since then, except in a few isolated instances, the main crime that protesters have committed in Minneapolis is being out past curfew. The day after Griffin led people away from the Fifth Precinct, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators gathered downtown at the U.S. Bank Stadium. As eight o'clock approached, a man with a bullhorn announced, "If anybody's confused or has questions about what's going on here, if you continue to stay in this area just know that they have been ordered to shoot to kill us."

The warning set off arguments over its credibility—surely the police couldn't use lethal rounds on protesters? Then again, hadn't the President himself threatened such violence? Tony Clark, a twenty-eight-year-old construction worker from the Southside, had no doubt. "Did you not understand what Trump said?" he asked a group huddled around him. "He said, 'We're at war now.'"

Clark had been a mainstay on the

front lines—a vibrant presence, vocally and sartorially. That day, he had on a camouflage-print down vest, no shirt, and his signature adornment: a quarter-size earring gauge bearing the words “NOT TODAY SATAN.” A cross was tattooed under his right eye, and a diamond under his left. The previous night, I’d walked alongside him as he’d driven slowly up Thirty-first Street, through a neighborhood of wood-frame houses with front porches and fenced-in lawns, encouraging the protesters who had fled the Fifth Precinct. At times, he’d stopped his gray sedan and climbed onto its roof to jeer at pursuing police officers. As people had gathered around his car, he had told them, “I don’t give a fuck if you’re Vice Lord, P. Stone, Blood, Latin Kings. We all together.” Clark then waved toward the police: “*They* the gangsters. *They* the mob.” Later, he’d stuck a megaphone out his window and held his phone to it while it played the video of Floyd’s death. “Y’all hear George crying?” Clark had shouted. “This is why we’re out here!”

Clark had known Floyd, and had looked up to him as a mentor—“my big homie,” he called him. They had often talked to each other at El Nuevo Rodeo, a club where Floyd had worked as a security guard. Clark told me that Floyd had urged him to be more involved in the neighborhood, and to more consciously exercise a positive influence on its youth: “He used to tell me to use my voice—that’s what he always said. Having tattoos on my face, people get the wrong impression. That’s what I loved about George. He told me, ‘As soon as you start talking—that’s when they’re gonna see you.’ People don’t know George. I needed those talks he gave me.”

Clark had seen Floyd being arrested from afar, without realizing who it was; only later, when the video was published online, did he learn what had happened to his friend. And the protests were personal in an additional way: in 2016, Clark’s brother Travis died in a car crash after being pursued by police, south of Minneapolis. “I’m also doing this for him,” Clark told me. When I asked him whether his brother would have demonstrated, he said, “Travis would’ve led the city.”

As Clark and the other remaining

protesters debated whether to violate the curfew, they were joined by marchers who had walked from Thirty-eighth and Chicago, three miles away, led by a group of California activists, including Joe Collins, an African-American congressional candidate from South Los Angeles. Collins and his colleagues directed the combined groups to follow them toward Interstate 35, which had been closed to traffic. Clark stepped into the march, as did Simone Hunter.

The city was deserted, and eerily silent, and as the protesters filled a wide four-lane avenue their chants resonated between sleek office towers and high-end apartment buildings. At the front, next to Collins, a marcher with a scarf tied around his face, his hat brim pulled low, and headphones in his ears nodded and privately sang along to The-Dream: “I’m feeling real black right now, real black right now. . . .”

Reaching an on-ramp, the marchers headed onto the empty interstate, where they found themselves suddenly trapped: in both directions, a few hundred feet away, a wall of police obstructed the highway. People were clearly nervous, but one of the organizers from California—a middle-aged man, anomalously clad in a pin-striped suit with gold cufflinks—assured everyone that as long as they remained peaceful no harm would come to them. “You do not have to worry—we are not here for violence,” he yelled. “They’re not gonna touch you. Trust me.”

Clark shook his head, unconvinced. “It’s about to get dangerous,” he told the man. “Y’all are playin’ with fire.”

As the protesters linked arms, someone handed out protective helmets from a garbage bag. “No,” the man in the pin-striped suit said, snatching a helmet away. “We’re not here for that.” The officers, however, soon started advancing toward the protesters, firing tear gas and forcing them up a dirt embankment leading to a Mobil gas station, where they regrouped, coughing and gagging. “Everybody remain calm!” Clark urged, his face dripping with milk. State troopers and sheriff’s deputies, with long batons, encircled the gas station; behind them, Joe Collins, the congressional candidate, was on his knees in a patch of tall grass, being detained. Troopers in camouflage uniforms, with

Kevlar helmets, flak jackets, gas masks, and assault rifles, paced the ranks. As a sense of alarm spread, the marcher who’d been singing to himself earlier raised his voice and sang aloud: “’Cause everywhere there’s a Chicago / The only way we’re getting out of here is if we hit the lotto.”

Simone Hunter walked up to a row of troopers and—just as she had outside the Third Precinct, when she was beaten and pepper-sprayed—boldly confronted them. I had trouble hearing what she was saying: there was a lot of racket, and after five days of tireless demonstration Hunter’s voice was almost gone. Still, it was obvious that she was using what little of it remained to give the troopers hell. The organizer in the pin-striped suit did not appreciate this. “Ma’am, please, can you back up?” he asked Hunter, to no avail. “Ma’am, please. Please. Please. Please.”

Eventually, several other protesters steered Hunter away. She was crying. As she continued to talk, undeterred, people gathered around her, listening. “My sister has kids who live here,” she said of the city. “They walk up and down these streets every day. This is our home. This is our *home* right here. We have enemies on all sides—not just on the streets. I’m tired. I’m fucking tired. I’ve dealt with racist shit my whole fucking life. I’m tired.” Then, clutching the front of her sweatshirt, Hunter told the protesters that she was wearing a stranger’s clothes and had spent the previous night in a stranger’s house—a white stranger’s. Later, she explained to me that she had been walking through the neighborhoods near the Fifth Precinct, after the protest there, when an S.U.V. pulled up alongside her. Inside were white men brandishing assault rifles. One of them shouted, “Go home!” Hunter sprinted down alleys and side streets, eventually encountering two white women. They invited Hunter to their place, where she slept on an air mattress in their living room. “I had never experienced anything like that before,” she said. “I was, like, This is the kind of stuff that gives you hope. It was just shocking.”

At the Mobil, she told the protesters, “Your neighbors got your back!” And, pointing at the troopers: “*These* people don’t got your back!”

Sometime later, the troopers and po-

lice began closing in, firing stun grenades and rubber bullets, even though we were already corralled, and no one had presented any threat. The deployment of force provoked intense panic. Several protesters wept and screamed. I remember feeling that the reaction was excessive, and thinking to myself, “Come on, they’re not going to kill us.” Later, while reviewing photographs and videos that I’d taken, I realized that many of the protesters who had stuck around up to this point were black, and that their experience of the incident was not identical to mine. Deep down, I was not afraid of the police; on an instinctive level, I understood that there was a limit to what they could do to me. If the legitimate fear that law-enforcement officers instilled in black protesters was fundamentally unknowable to me, so was the courage that people like Hunter had to summon when standing up to them.

As the officers converged on us, Deondre Moore, a twenty-five-year-old African-American from Houston—George Floyd’s home town—held his arms high and pleaded, “Don’t shoot! Let us leave!” A few minutes later, a rubber bullet struck Moore squarely in the chest. He fell to the ground, writhing in pain. “I thought it was a real bullet,” he later told me. The protesters were commanded to lie on their stomachs with their hands behind their backs—the same position as the silhouette painted on the pavement outside the Cup Foods. As National Guard units arrived in armored Humvees, the state troopers began zip-tying people by their wrists and leading them away. The protesters were surrounded by more than a hundred officers, troopers, deputies, and soldiers—almost all of whom were white. Hunter seemed less frightened than other protesters. Producing a Sharpie pen from her bag of supplies, she started writing the phone number of a local bail fund on people’s forearms. A young police officer, crouching behind his riot shield, trained his rubber-bullet gun on her and held it there. He looked terrified.

Ultimately, around a hundred and fifty protesters were loaded onto buses and taken to jail. (Journalists were not arrested, although state troopers punctured the tires of my rental car.) After being issued citations for breaking the



Tony Clark, a friend of Floyd’s, said, “He used to tell me to use my voice.”

curfew, the demonstrators were released early the next morning. The violation, a misdemeanor, is punishable by up to a thousand-dollar fine or three months’ imprisonment. Back home, Hunter brought her citation outside, held a lighter to it, and watched it burn.

A little after midnight, while Hunter was still in jail, I swung by Thirty-eighth and Chicago, where people were still congregating. Tony Clark was there, having slipped away from the protest moments before it was besieged. There was a palpable edge: after the past week, residents were exhausted, their emotions raw and their nerves frayed. A global uprising had emanated from the intersection, but for many locals the stresses and pressures that had defined their world before Floyd’s death were no less consuming than before.

A dispute led to a fight, which gained a centripetal energy that pulled in more and more bystanders until dozens of young people were involved, weapons were pulled out, and a dire outcome looked imminent. Then, as abruptly as it had started, it was over. A tall, imposing figure with a commanding voice appeared to have single-handedly stopped the brawl. When he ordered everyone to gather around him in the intersection, nobody argued.

He was Corey Moore, a forty-four-year-old North Carolina native who had moved to Minneapolis in 2000. A veteran combat medic, he served in the Army for eight and a half years, until he was honorably discharged, in 2013, after sustaining an injury in Iraq. Moore was no fan of the Minneapolis Police Department, and he later told me that Floyd’s killing had been a tragic ending to



"It's your standard 'I'm not looking for anything serious, but I'm open to sliding into a long-term relationship as long as you never bring up marriage' contract."

an all-too-common scenario for black Northsiders and Southsiders: "His situation went from zero to sixty, like that. That's what it's like for people out here, if you get accused of anything." But he also believed in peaceful protest. He had been at the Third Precinct house on the first day of demonstrations, and had "got into it" with a group of "Antifa-type people" spitting at the police. When Moore told an especially strident white man that he "wasn't helping our situation," the man contemptuously asked Moore for his badge number.

Now, with everyone at Thirty-eighth and Chicago sitting around the circle of candles and flowers, Moore paced in front of them, dressing down those who'd been fighting. "That's what they want!" he shouted, like a drill sergeant. "I don't give a fuck who bumps into you, who talks about your mama—that's your brother! We are not gonna entertain them with us acting like animals! We are not animals!"

"That's what's up, big bro!" someone yelled out.

"I don't know any of y'all's names, but I swear on Jesus I will die for every last one of you!" Moore went on. "We gonna do this the right way."

"Keep that peace, big bro!"

Pointing at the spot where Floyd was

killed, Moore said, "This man's life will not be in vain. This is going worldwide. The entire world is hearing us." Scanning the faces of his rapt young audience, Moore continued, "Every O.G. out here knows: we failed y'all. But it won't happen another night. We got your back, come hell or high water. . . . If you an O.G., put your hand up!" Tony Clark, who'd joined Moore inside the circle, raised a fist in the air. When Moore finished, Clark offered a prayer: "Lord Jesus, I pray that we can wake up and stand still with each other."

I left not long after this, but Moore later told me that he and about twenty other people had sat there until dawn. As the night deepened, people stood one at a time to express themselves and share their stories. "You started hearing individual voices," Moore recalled. "It was awesome." There were also interludes of silence. Squad cars periodically approached the barricades, but never crossed them. The intersection, Moore said, felt like an oasis.

For the most part, he moderated and listened. He did not talk about the time, in Alabama, when he was en route to a Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course and was pulled over by white police officers, because he fit the description of a suspect. He did not re-

count how he was made to get out of his vehicle, at gunpoint, even though he was in uniform, with his military orders in hand and an Army duffelbag on the back seat. Nor did he explain how, after so many similar encounters, being stopped by the police scared him more than anything he'd experienced in Iraq—especially when one of his four children was in the car. Over there, he could at least defend himself.

But Moore did try to crystallize for the white people who were at Thirty-eighth and Chicago what it felt like to be black in America. He put it this way: "It's like you're standing in this tight line that you can't get out of. And everything that's happening up ahead is horrible as hell. And you know that eventually you're going to be next."

The following afternoon, Terrence Floyd made his visit to the intersection, sat by the painted silhouette, and asked the protesters to "do this another way." Although at that point the demonstrations in Minneapolis had already become peaceful, Terrence's appeal, like Moore's the night before, arrived precisely at the moment it was needed. The mood in Minneapolis had shifted from one of fervid insurrection to fatigue—a kind of dazed astonishment at all that had happened, and tentative uncertainty about what to do now.

If protesters on the ground were suddenly unsure how to proceed, activists and organizers, who until then had been largely absent from the streets, were not. Throughout the past few years, Minneapolis's black-activist network had coalesced around an overarching policy objective that, so far, had gained little traction: defunding and disbanding the city police department. Tony Williams, the Reclaim the Block member, said that many activists in Minneapolis came to promote this solution after seeing the ineffectiveness of reform measures—such as mandated body cameras for officers—that were adopted after the Jamar Clark and Philando Castile killings. During the Obama Administration, Minneapolis was one of six cities that participated in a progressive three-year federal program intended to "increase trust between communities and the criminal justice system," and, in 2017, Medaria Arradondo, one of the Afri-

can-American officers who had sued the department for racial discrimination a decade earlier, was appointed chief of police. But Williams said that such steps had been “primarily about image rather than about substance”; eventually, he and his peers concluded that “this is really a cycle, and the reforms that are a part of the cycle don’t actually change the math that leads to these killings in the first place.” He continued, “If we don’t want to just put a Band-Aid over the bullet wound, we need to fundamentally reassess how to do public safety.”

Until two weeks ago, the view that no amount of reform could fix the police department—that its essential architecture threatened people of color—was little discussed outside of activist and academic circles. “But we’ve seen an enormous groundswell of support since the murder of George Floyd,” Williams said. As well-coordinated demonstrations have supplanted the spontaneous uprising of late May, pointed calls to disband the Minneapolis Police Department have eclipsed less programmatic and more emotional demands for justice. Notably, the majority of the people at “abolish the police” events have been white, and few of the front-line protesters I spent time with attended them.

On June 6th, Black Visions Collective, a group aligned with Reclaim the Block, organized a march that ended in Northeast Minneapolis, outside Mayor Frey’s apartment. Frey, a white, thirty-eight-year-old Democrat and a civil-rights lawyer, emerged from his home and navigated the crowds to where Kandace Montgomery, the director of Black Visions Collective, stood in the bed of a truck. If Frey had planned on delivering an apology, he was in for a surprise. Looming over the mayor, Montgomery asked into her microphone, “Yes or no—will you commit to defunding the Minneapolis Police Department?”

When, after some vacillation, Frey responded, “I do not support the full abolition of the police department,” Montgomery yelled at him to “get the fuck out of here.” Frey walked away, through a sea of middle fingers, shouted insults, and chants of “Shame!”

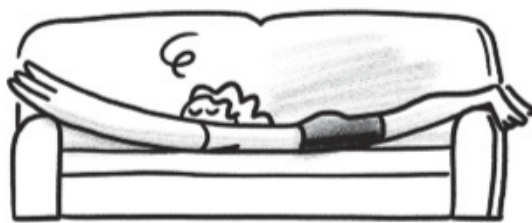
The next day, nine members of the Minneapolis City Council—a veto-proof majority—announced their pledge to dismantle the police department. The

president of the council declared, “Our efforts at incremental reform have failed. Period.” The historic decision has launched the city of Minneapolis into uncharted territory, and it remains unclear what, exactly, will happen if the department is indeed dissolved. (Frey remains opposed.) “We’re all figuring it out in real time,” Tony Williams, who is involved in discussions with the council, said. “There are a lot of questions. This has never been done before.” But, Williams emphasized, “we can’t build a new model from scratch without engaging with the community about what we want that to look like—that’s how we ended up in this mess.”

Just how broadly the community supports disbanding the police is, however, also unknown. Evidence is anecdotal. There has been no referendum, or even recent polling. On the evening of June 7th, I was at Thirty-eighth and Chicago, sitting with Tony Clark across from the Cup Foods, when reports of the council’s pledge appeared on my phone. Clark looked taken aback when I told him the news. “Like, no police?” he said. It was the first time he’d heard of the idea.

Clark turned to his friend, a twenty-seven-year-old named Lavish James, who’d grown up three blocks away. “Bro, you want the cops to go home?”

James had been among the protesters arrested near the stadium, along with Hunter, and he was not shy about denouncing the racism and abusiveness of



the Minneapolis police. Yet he responded without hesitation: “No. If the cops go home, we’re fucking turning into Hamas.”

Corey Moore is of a similar mind. Like James, he believes that violent, armed bad actors would inevitably dominate and exploit any environment free of law enforcement. It’s not the institution that should be done away with, he said, but, rather, “the mentality that it’s us against them.”

Williams and his fellow-activists

counter that Minneapolis is already dominated by violent, armed bad actors: the police.

The day after Cornell Griffin was shot in the neck with a rubber bullet, he went with his wife and several friends to the Third Precinct house, where the protests in Minneapolis had begun. Huge slabs of concrete sealed the entrance to the partially incinerated station. People were boarding up the Target across the street and rolling white paint over graffiti. In a corner of the parking lot, Griffin and his friends constructed a small stage from two-by-fours and plywood. A crowd gathered. Griffin mounted the structure and recited a credo: “We’ve decided we are not divided, because we’ve decided to take a stand. I don’t care who you are, or your skin color, if you’re with me today you’re my sister or my brother.”

He’s been out there each day since. When people come, he asks them to repeat his refrain. Then they add their signature to the stage, which is now covered with hundreds of names. “They’re held accountable from that point on,” Griffin told me.

Tony Clark is considering travelling to other cities to tell protesters about what took place in Minneapolis. He is worried that the energy of the uprising is dissipating, and that the global attention it briefly attracted has already drifted elsewhere. On June 12th, he told me, “I want to keep up the fight. I want to keep the fire burning. I feel like this was just Round One.”

Several weeks have passed since Floyd was killed. Simone Hunter still goes to Thirty-eighth and Chicago every day. The intersection has become a second home for her—or a first home. Recently, she joined a volunteer security detail, and now works nights, standing guard at one of the barricades from evening until sunrise. She instantly took to the role, tossing out journalists and outside visitors after dark. One morning, at the end of her shift, I gave her a ride to her friend’s house. She looked exhausted. Her voice was still raw from chanting and yelling at police. Her fingers were blistered from grabbing a tear-gas canister and throwing it at state troopers.

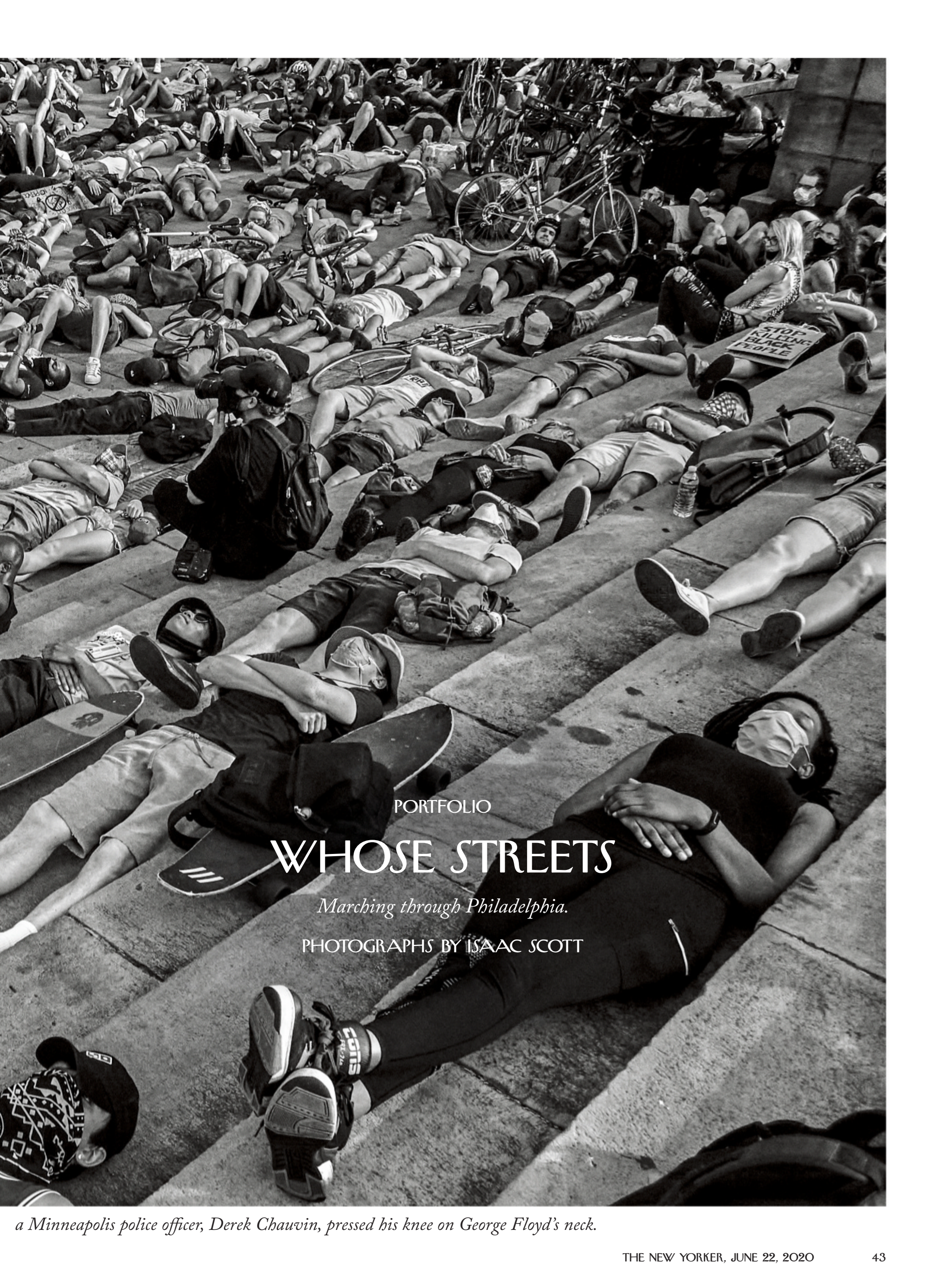
“I’m so tired,” she said.

I asked her if she would be at the vigil site later.

“Hell yeah,” Hunter said. “I’ll probably walk back in an hour or two.” ♦



Outside the Philadelphia Museum of Art, protesters lay down for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, the amount of time that



PORTFOLIO

WHOSE STREETS

Marching through Philadelphia.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ISAAC SCOTT

a Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, pressed his knee on George Floyd's neck.

Isaac Scott is twenty-nine. Raised in Madison, Wisconsin, he moved to Philadelphia a couple of years ago to study ceramics at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture, at Temple University, where he worked long hours at a potter's wheel. So, when the pandemic shut down the school and his studio, he was left without an artistic outlet. He started taking a camera with him everywhere, walking all over the city, "trying to put down some images and ideas—for later," he said. But after the murder of George Floyd, in Minneapolis, and the spread of demonstrations across the country, he took to marching among the marchers, particularly along the stretch from City Hall to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He and his camera stayed with the protests, from the early days of intense confrontation, of vandalism and police cars in flames, to the far more peaceful days that followed.

"I was teargassed twice," Scott said, as he took a morning break. "People were getting maced by the cops at point-blank range." He is hardly an experienced conflict journalist, and yet he would regularly get as close as he could to the front lines—and that meant being close to agitated police in riot gear. "I'm a six-foot-three black dude and I knew they'd have no issues beating me, and people like me, over the head," he said, describing one particular moment of confrontation and fear. "I could only see things like that if I was really up close and with people. That was the kind of thing I was there to capture."

In many cities, the effect of the demonstrations has shifted from the realm of the symbolic to the realm of policy. In Philadelphia, the removal of a bronze statue of the notoriously racist Frank Rizzo, who was the city's mayor for most of the seventies, was followed by a raft of bills introduced in the city council to reform the police department. "The energy is there, and the city is finally respecting what's happening," Scott said. "Now I gotta get out there again. There's more to come."

—David Remnick



When police officers fired rubber bullets and tear gas into a crowd marching down



Interstate 676, protesters tried to escape over a nearby fence. “Your whole face feels like it’s on fire,” Scott said.



A police car burned at an intersection in the center of Philadelphia. "I've been to plenty of protests in my life," Scott said. "But



this one was completely different. The emotions were so raw."



Experienced organizers have been joined on the streets by first-time protesters. On one hot day, a leader paused every thirty



minutes to urge marchers to get food and water. "There was a real sense of community," Scott said.



As a team of police in riot gear prepared to charge into a crowd, several white protesters locked arms in front of them. Scott said



this is “one of the ways that white people can use their privilege to defend people of color.”



An estimated hundred thousand protesters marched through Philadelphia to the Museum of Art, where a group formed around



a child break-dancing. The celebratory spirit was part of what Scott called “a historic day.”



Scott photographed the crowd from the top of the museum's steps. "We only get certain moments in history where there's an



opportunity to make real change," he said. "I hope we take advantage of this moment while we have it."

PUNISHMENT BY PANDEMIC

In a penitentiary with one of the U.S.'s largest coronavirus outbreaks, prison terms become death sentences.

BY RACHEL AVIV

DeMarco Raynor, who is incarcerated at Cummins Unit, a penitentiary in southeast Arkansas, had been approved for its most prestigious job: working at the governor's mansion. Prison labor at the mansion is a "longstanding tradition, which kept down costs," Hillary Clinton wrote, in a memoir. (She noted that "onetime murderers" proved to be the best employees.) Raynor saw the position, which was unpaid, as a chance to meet people with the power to grant him clemency. But, shortly before he was to begin, an officer said that he had violated prison rules by wearing slippers that he had made himself. The job was revoked. Raynor believed that the officer had intentionally thwarted his opportunity. "I still maintain my manhood, and he felt like that was too much," Raynor said. Another officer once told him, "Man, you walk around just like you're free."

Raynor is forty-one, and is serving a life sentence for shooting a man during a drunken confrontation, when he was twenty. Raynor, who is black, was convicted by eleven white jurors and one black woman. "I will die remembering her name," he told me. "She looked at me the whole trial like I was her son, and then, when the verdict came back, she couldn't look at me." Raynor monitors his use of language, so that he doesn't assimilate to institutional life. He refuses to call food "money"; he will not invite people to his "house" when he means his cell. He bristles when prisoners, working unpaid jobs, describe an officer as their "boss."

Raynor is part of a group of men at Cummins who call themselves the Think Tank. They have all been in prison for more than fifteen years, many serving life sentences they received when they were teen-agers or in their early twenties. They consider it their

role to guide younger men. Raynor, who had ambitions of being a psychiatrist, likes to break down the meaning of words like "Negro" and "chattel" and "death," and to discuss how language shapes our identities. He and his friends hold study sessions on the history of black people in America—"The black man must be awakened to the knowledge that he is not what this society has taught him to be," Raynor wrote, for a recent session—and circulate books about mindfulness and maintaining romantic relationships. "We are trying to take care of our children," Qadir, another member of the Think Tank, told me. Qadir, who is forty-four (and who feared that using his full name would result in retaliation), is a clerk in the prison's kitchen. When he notices that men are sick or struggling, he provides them with double portions, along with a note: "Don't think you're going to live on this. I've only got a certain number of people I can help."

In mid-March, when the coronavirus first arrived in Arkansas, the Think Tank discussed the story of Noah. Qadir told me, "Here was a man building an ark, and he is saying, 'Get ready. Prepare.' But no one was listening." Raynor found the story of Moses more relevant: "I view it more like, these are the plagues that God is sending upon Pharaoh, who is in love with his authority, in order to let his people go."

Every morning, more than a hundred men at Cummins Unit go to work on the Hoe Squad. Dressed in white, they pile into an open trailer, and a tractor pulls them deep into the prison's fields. Cummins sits on nearly eighteen thousand acres of land and has a hundred and ten thousand chickens, two thousand cattle, and forty-one horses. The men on the Hoe Squad pull weeds, dig ditches, and pick cot-

ton, cucumbers, and watermelons. Arkansas is one of only a few states where prison labor is free. (Other states pay a nominal wage, such as ten cents an hour.) A dozen "field riders"—officers on horseback, wearing cowboy hats—patrol the inmates, and, if anyone lags, they threaten to "call the truck": a major will drive the inmate to a group of isolation cells known as the Hole.

In late March, the men at Cummins began questioning the logic of going into the fields during the pandemic. Raynor, whose mother had been a corrections officer at another prison in Arkansas, said, "I counselled the men that they were endangering their health by continuing to squish into a trailer, shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip."

An inmate assigned to the Hoe Squad, who asked to go by his initials, D.B., agreed, as did dozens of others. When officers called their names for work, D.B. said, "we all laid down in our beds." The men were disciplined for "unexcused absence"—a violation that carries a punishment of up to fifteen days in isolation. "There's a global pandemic that is air-born," one man wrote in a formal grievance, on March 26th. "I'm being forced to go out into the field thus putting my life in danger."

Asa Hutchinson, the governor of Arkansas, had asked that businesses cease "nonessential functions," and D.B. couldn't understand how the work of the Hoe Squad qualified as essential. Sometimes, he and the other men would spend a day removing grass with a hoe, in order to clear land for planting; when they finished, a tractor would swiftly mow the same patch. It seemed as if the prison was trying to demonstrate the needlessness of their labor and time. Once, when Raynor was assigned to the Hoe Squad, he told an officer that it didn't make sense to use gardening tools rather than modern



After inmates complained, an official argued that their conditions were not “ones that today’s society does not tolerate.”

farming technology. The officer responded, "We don't want your brain. We want your back."

On April 1st, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reported that an officer who worked on the farm at Cummins had tested positive for the coronavirus. "You would think our captains or sergeants or majors would warn us about something like this, but they didn't speak about it," another officer, whom I'll call Marie, told me. "They kept everything in the closet. If you didn't catch the news, you were in the blind." A spokesperson for the Arkansas Department of Corrections had told the *Gazette* that the infected officer didn't work inside prison walls, but Marie knew that officers couldn't go a day without interacting with inmates. "The inmates run the penitentiary," she told me. "Officers don't lift their fingers for nothing. If the inmates don't do it, it's not going to get done." The next day, Marie and a few other officers wore masks to work, but, when they entered the prison, they were told to put the masks away. "They don't want the inmates frantic," Marie said. She left her mask in her car.

A few days later, a forty-nine-year-old inmate, Daryl Hussey, who has been

in prison for twenty-three years, stopped getting out of bed. Hussey lived in an open barracks, as do about half the men at Cummins, which houses nearly two thousand prisoners. In these barracks, some fifty metal cots are arranged in rows, many less than three feet from one another, and bolted to the floor. When the men lie down, they can smell one another's breath. One of the men in the Think Tank, Dashujahn Danzie, was the "picket man" in Hussey's barracks: he did all the laundry. For more than a week, he had noticed that Hussey wasn't showering, eating, or sending his clothes to the wash. When people asked Hussey what was wrong, Danzie said, "he just nodded his head like he was straight."

On April 10th, Hussey passed out, and he was tested for the coronavirus. When the results came back positive, the Hoe Squad was finally suspended. Hussey was taken to the Hole in a wheelchair. In an e-mail, Dexter Payne, the director of the Division of Correction, had instructed all his wardens to "prepare a portion/area of your punitive isolation areas to house inmates effected by the CoronaVirus."

Danzie stripped Hussey's bed himself. Then he went to the nurse's sta-

tion to ask for a boil bag, so he could separate Hussey's sheets from the rest of the wash. Danzie said that the nurse there, Shirley Lubin Wilson, told him, "Get the fuck away from my window." In a federal civil-rights lawsuit last year, Wilson was accused of wrapping a telephone cord around an inmate's neck while a second nurse blocked the surveillance camera. (A spokesperson for Wellpath, a for-profit health-care provider that runs the infirmaries in Arkansas prisons, said that the company "believes these allegations to be without merit." Wilson didn't respond to a request for comment.)

Four nurses tested the forty-six other men in Hussey's barracks for the coronavirus, administering numerous tests without changing their gloves. All but three men had it. Raynor's barracks was also tested. Raynor said that a sergeant later shouted into the barracks, "Y'all are negative." But Raynor noticed that when a man defecated a few feet away from him he wasn't bothered by the smell. He asked his cousin to call the prison's central office to find out the results of his test. He was positive. "I went around the barracks telling the guys, 'I'm positive, and you probably are, too.'"

Inmates in the prison's garment shop were given a new task: manufacturing eighty thousand masks for prisoners and officers throughout the state. A woman named Carrie Coleman told me that her son had sewn masks at Cummins for two days while he had a fever and chills. (It wasn't until he had a temperature of a hundred and four degrees that he was carried to the infirmary.) Marie said that the masks kept falling off her face; when she talked, she sucked the material into her mouth. Then she noticed that the wardens and deputy wardens were secretly wearing masks they'd brought from home underneath the state-issued ones.

On April 21st, Wellpath held drive-through testing for officers. "If your test results are positive," a memo from the Arkansas Department of Health said, "you may need to work if you do not display any symptoms." Governor Hutchinson, in his daily press conference, explained, "In terms of the guards that might have tested positive, it is my understanding that they would only be



"Can you be more specific?"

guarding barracks in which the inmates have tested positive.” He added, “So those precautions are in place, and certainly they are logical.” But Marie couldn’t make sense of the policy: all the guards were passing through the same entrance, checkpoints, and hallways.

An inmate named Donnie said that when an officer came to the door of his barracks, where men had tested positive, he asked if she had the virus, and she said that she hadn’t been tested. “Our newspaper says you must be positive for corona if you’re working our barracks,” Donnie told her. He said that she responded sarcastically, “Well, they say your beds are six feet apart, too.”

One night, an older inmate told Marie that he was struggling to breathe. His eyes were bloodshot, and he looked as if he were about to faint. Marie asked a sergeant to escort him to the infirmary, but, she said, the sergeant told her, “Tell him to go get on that kiosk”—a computer touched by dozens of inmates each day—so that he could fill out a request to visit the infirmary, known as a sick call.

Amie Burrow, a nurse who worked for Wellpath until late 2019, in several Arkansas prisons, said that, when inmates put in sick calls, they typically weren’t seen by a doctor for at least two weeks. Sometimes the infirmary nurses would become so overwhelmed by sick calls that—to avoid being fined if they didn’t respond within three days, as was the policy—they would shred them. (Inmates who don’t have access to a kiosk write their requests on paper slips.) “It was general operating procedure,” Burrow told me. “I watched nurses put the paper sick calls in the shredder and never blink an eye.” When inmates complained, the nurses would say, “Oh, the slip got lost in the box,” or “You filled out the wrong form.” Burrow said, “They could easily blame it on the inmate.”

Marie finally called a Code Green, the signal for medical emergency, on the prison radio system. A nurse arrived with a wheelchair, but the infirmary was full. Instead, the man was taken to a holding cell. He had no bed, toilet, or running water. “A lot of times, they forget the inmates are there,” Marie said. “They’ll stay there for hours—hours.”

After the man was taken away, Marie said, she was reprimanded by a sergeant,

who said, “He could have stayed on his rack and slept.” She told me, “That’s how they look at it: ‘Tell him to sleep it off.’”

By the third week of April, Qadir, the kitchen clerk, had chills and had lost his sense of smell. He had been tested for the coronavirus, and while he waited for the results he reported to his job. Most of the other kitchen workers were refusing to work. Qadir, whose mother had been the president of the N.A.A.C.P. in West Memphis, Arkansas, felt ashamed that inmates might see him as a strike-breaker. As he walked to the kitchen, he said, “I felt eyes piercing my back. I knew they must feel like, Mr. Pro-black—Mr. I-don’t-go-for-this-or-for-that—is working for the system.”

He spent the day unloading canned goods from three tractor-trailers. “I’m physically fit, and for me to take a sixty-pound box and throw it five feet away—I love to do that,” he said. But he barely had the strength to lift a carton of ground beef. At the end of the day, he gathered what he had come for: enough green beans, peas, garlic, vinegar, and plastic gloves to last him several weeks. “I wasn’t going to hold a press conference to explain my reasoning,” he said. “But, hell, I wasn’t selling out. I was there because I needed ingredients to brave the storm.”

By April 25th, more test results had come back: eight hundred and twenty-six inmates and thirty-three staff members had the virus. The warden placed all the barracks on lockdown. With no inmates working, officers had to do the cooking and cleaning themselves. “When the officers saw how nasty the kitchen was, they got out of there,” Marie said. “It had been all right for them to go in there and call the shots. But as far as being in there for long periods of time, moving around and preparing dinner—you can’t do that in filth.”

The officers made rudimentary meals, like peanut-butter-and-jelly or baloney sandwiches, and delivered them to the barracks. Greens were almost never served, an omission that disappointed Qadir but didn’t surprise him. He has been in prison for twenty-five years—he was sen-

tenced to life without parole when he was nineteen, after his friend shot a man and Qadir drove him away from the scene. Before the coronavirus outbreak, he and the other inmates in the kitchen cooked the most nutritious meals they could make with limited ingredients. They poured cans of vegetables into a fifty-five-gallon pot and stirred them with a boat paddle. “When you are feeding your fellow-man, there should be no half-stepping,” he said.

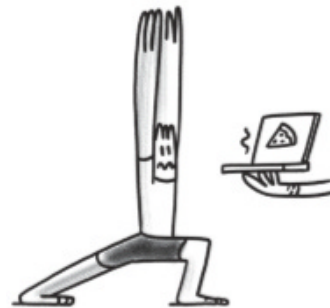
Prisoners often speak of a fear of adapting to incarceration to such a degree that they become institutionalized, losing their individual agency. Once the inmates stopped working,

Marie saw that the officers had developed their own kind of learned helplessness. “When you work there, it’s like you really are in the slavery days, because you’ve got inmates there who will actually be, like, ‘What else you need, boss?’” she said. “They literally come at you like that. You drop a piece of paper, and they come out of nowhere, running to pick it up, saying, ‘I got it, I got it!’”

Prisoners at Cummins take on different identities depending on where in the institution they live. “They’ve divided us into so-called field niggers and house niggers,” Raynor said. The men who work on the Hoe Squad live on the East Hall, where the outbreak began. Raynor once worked as a porter in the infirmary, and, when East Hall residents came in overheated or feeling faint, he would hear the nurses say, “He’s just trying to get out of work,” or “He’s just high.”

The men on the West Hall are treated with less suspicion. They work indoors or in “up front” jobs, gardening or washing officers’ cars. Some work as “domestics” in a community near Cummins known as the Free Line, where prison employees and their families live. They clean, do yard work, and even babysit. Sometimes a warden’s children become so attached to an inmate that if the warden is transferred to a new prison the family takes their “domestic” with them. (The Department of Corrections denies that inmates interact with children.)

The hierarchy among inmates has structured life at Cummins for more



than a century. Founded in 1902 on the site of two cotton plantations, Cummins, which was designed as a prison for black men, received no funds from the state; it would support itself and, in years of good harvest, make a profit. There were few paid employees. Instead, the penitentiary was largely run by inmate trustees, who carried guns and lived in shacks outside the prison. Next in the hierarchy were the “do-pops”: when the trustees were about to walk through a door, the do-pops popped it open. The lowest class of prisoners were the “rank men,” who worked on the Hoe Squad. If they didn’t pick enough cotton or vegetables, they were made to lie face down on the ground, sometimes with their pants lowered, as an officer whipped them with a five-foot leather strap. In a memoir, Thomas Murton, who, in 1968, served as the superintendent of Arkansas’s prisons, wrote, “This whole system of exploitation began in the days after the Civil War, when the farmers and plantation owners who were forced to free their slaves looked for a new source of cheap labor.” Murton was fired after he began digging for skeletons on the grounds of Cummins, where he believed several inmates had been murdered. He told the press, “You can’t provide the cure if you don’t know the disease.”

In 1970, in response to a class-action suit stemming from petitions by prisoners, a federal judge concluded, for the first time in the country’s history, that a state’s entire prison system violated the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. (“Particularly at Cummins,” he wrote.) The judge described the Arkansas system as a “dark and evil world” operating according to “customs completely foreign to free world culture.” In an annual report that year, the commissioner of the prison system acknowledged that “the so-called ‘self-supporting prisons for profit’ have been exposed as . . . destroying institutions which stand as incongruous monuments to despair.”

The case represented a “profound revolution in understanding the legal status of prisoners,” Judith Resnik, a law professor at Yale who is working on a book about prisoners’ rights, told me. Previously, reformers had tried to claim that certain punishments were un-Christian or unscientific or immoral,

but “this was: there are certain prohibitions on how the state deals with me, because I am a human being entitled to rights. The obligation is not a grace—it’s a right.”

Philip Kaplan, one of the lawyers who represented the inmates, told me that, even after the prisons were placed under federal supervision, “we had to pull teeth. Their view was: these are more like animals as opposed to human beings.” The system was desegregated, but the prisoners still worked for free. As late as 1992, an internal investigation found that black inmates were ten times more likely than other inmates to be assigned the job of shining officers’ shoes. Today, though black people make up only fifteen per cent of the population in Arkansas, more than forty per cent of the state’s prisoners are African-American.

Raynor’s mother, Elvera, who began working for the Department of Corrections in 1994, said that officers were os-

tracized if they showed compassion toward inmates. They’d be branded as “inmate lovers,” a term derived from “nigger lover.” As a poorly paid corrections officer, she felt a sense of camaraderie with the inmates. “The wardens and majors wouldn’t even talk to us,” she said. “They thought we were too low-life.” After Raynor went to prison, she quit. “I couldn’t sit around and watch what the inmates were going through,” she said.

Bobby Roberts, a former member of the Arkansas Board of Corrections, told me, “What always fascinated me about our prison system is the implied contract that exists between the inmate and the correctional officer.” In theory, it shouldn’t be possible for an officer to contain a barracks of some fifty men, but, Roberts said, “there’s the written prison rules, and then there’s the way things actually operate, which is a matter of both

PIGEON AND HAWK

A new grad student far away from home,
I took every step on trembling ground.
I knew no one. Who were my friends?
The other black student in the program
ducked and rushed away when our eyes met.
Seminar rooms were full of hungry dogs
snapping up scraps of nodding approval.
At the end of a campus reception
I accepted the offer of a ride
from campus to my downtown room-with-bath.

October. Evenings were getting cool.
The walk over the bridge downtown
felt dangerously long when it was dark.
Did the young man who offered me a ride
tell me his name? What was it about him
that made me say Yes thanks, like a damn fool?
When we were in his car and he said oops,
he had forgotten something at his place
he had to pick up, and asked if I’d mind
if we stopped there, why did I say O.K.?

Did we talk during the drive? Was the radio on?
Did I just watch the businesses,
in thinning traffic, become a suburb
where his apartment complex was in a woods
already splendid in autumn colors
so beautiful they took my words away?

When he pulled up and said I should come in,
it would only take a minute, why did I go
upstairs with him, wait as the key unlocked
his apartment, and go inside?

The building was silent. A big window
in the living room looked at parking lots
with a few parked cars, and the glowing trees.
He said I'll be right back, and disappeared
into the bedroom. I turned to the view,
thinking of nothing, my mind a blank page
that grew emptier as the minutes passed.
What was he doing during those minutes,
as I stood dreaming like a fat pigeon
in the keen purview of a circling hawk?

What could he have needed to go home for,
that was so important he had to go
there first, before he drove me home? Was he
wrestling with opportunity?

Human horrors

are not inevitable. Some people stop
themselves, before they cross moral divides.
A drinking buddy might say Cool it, bro.
A cop might take his knee off a black man's throat.
A young man might come out and say O.K.,
let's go, and drive you home. What was his name?

—Marilyn Nelson

sides understanding the boundaries.”

As the outbreak spread, the contract
broke down. Some officers stopped com-
ing to work, because they were sick or
afraid. Those who showed up rarely
made security rounds. They delivered
meals sporadically, on carts typically
used to transport laundry or trash. One
man said that when he tried to submit
a grievance an officer advised him not
to expect the form to be signed by a ser-
geant, the first step for resolving a com-
plaint. The officer said that he'd seen
grievances in a bathroom trash can.

Raynor sensed that the officers blamed
the inmates for the fact that they were
now doing work that prisoners were sup-
posed to perform. “It's like they think
we're making them do the laundry and
sweep the floor,” he said. He told an
officer, “This is bigger than me as an in-
mate and you as a low-level correctional
officer. We've both been subjected to the
same conditions.”

During the last weekend of April,
men in a barracks on the East Hall
threw a TV through one of their win-
dows. When Marie came to the bar-
racks, they began shouting that their
sick calls were going unanswered, and
that the positives were being mixed with
the negatives. Through the windows of
the barracks, she urged them not to riot.
“They don't know the depths of it,” she
told them, referring to the administra-
tion. “All they know is you all are here
acting the fool.” She reminded them,
“Regardless of what, you are a man be-
fore anything.”

D.B., the inmate who had been dis-
ciplined for not going to the Hoe Squad,
said that one night, without explanation,
a deputy warden told him and five other
men to pack their belongings. They fol-
lowed the orders, but, as they approached
a new barracks, they saw through the
windows that a few men were holding
handmade knives. Another was bleed-

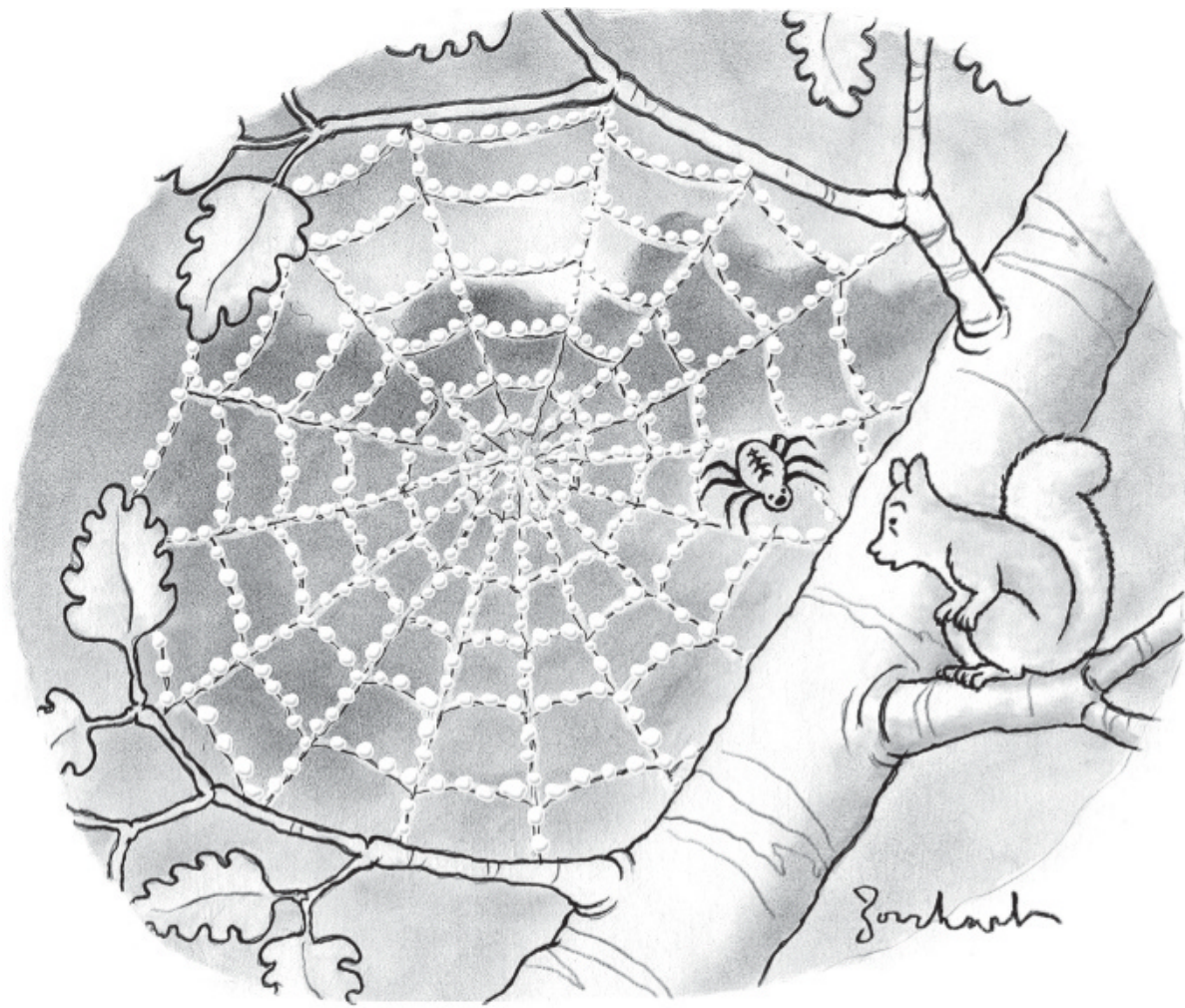
ing. “They were hollering and beefing,
and they looked like animals,” D.B. said.
“It was like something out of the mov-
ies.” Donnie, who was also there, said
that one man in the barracks yelled at
the guards, “We don't know if the dudes
coming in are positive or negative—you
can't put them in here.”

D.B. and the other men refused to
step inside the barracks. “Take us back
to where we come from,” D.B. said. For
fifteen minutes, they stood outside the
barracks, trying to negotiate with one
of the deputy wardens. Finally, he and
Donnie said, the deputy warden shook
his head and muttered, “I'm just about
to say, ‘Fuck it.’” The men were led back
to their barracks. By the time D.B. re-
turned, he was in tears. He is serving a
ten-year sentence, for discharging a fire-
arm from his car. “They have absolutely
no control over this prison,” he said.
“We don't have nobody to reach out to.
I just want to go home and do house
arrest. I don't want to die like this.”

The men in the Think Tank tried to
defuse tension between the inmates
and the officers, a practice they'd main-
tained for years. “At the training acad-
emy, the officers become indoctrinated
that their job is to punish,” Kaleem Na-
zeem, a member of the Think Tank who
was recently released, told me. “But we
tell them, ‘As long as you hold on to the
core values that your mother and your
grandmother gave you, you're going to
be all right here.’” He added, “It's all
about pitch and tone.”

When Qadir met officers who were
new to the job, he sometimes provided
them with what he called “orientation.”
He broke down the conditions of the
average prisoner. “We want them to un-
derstand that we have been working for
this prison for eight hours a day, every
year, for free,” he said. If an inmate on
the Hoe Squad takes a cucumber from
the farm—the inmates grow them, but
they can go for years without tasting
one—what's the harm in letting the
man eat one fresh vegetable? Qadir said,
“Some go by the book, some turn a blind
eye, and some even feed us themselves.”

To prevent the inmates from rioting
as the crisis worsened, the Think Tank
tried to get them to enlarge their per-
spective, too. Qadir, who lived on the
West Hall, told them, “Imagine you are



"It's not art, really—just something I pulled out of my butt."

a correctional officer at home with your children after a ten-hour shift, and you have to turn around and drive an hour back to work because there's a disturbance here." But each time a meagre meal arrived it served as a trigger. "Let this be a safe zone," Raynor warned the men in his barracks, on the East Hall. "Everybody can't go down onto the battlefield. Somebody has to be left behind to tell the story."

Down the hallway, in a different barracks, the men were not easily subdued. On May 2nd, they became so frustrated by the lack of attention—an officer had refused to sign an inmate's grievance about how they were being fed little more than hard-boiled eggs—that a few men broke open the window of the officers' control booth and unlocked the doors on their hallway. "Free the boys, man! Free them, man!" an inmate was filmed shouting. Officers fled their posts. About an hour later, an emergency-response team arrived in riot gear, with a cart of weapons from the prison's armory. The officers sprayed tear gas into the barracks. The chemical can make the respiratory tract more susceptible to

infection and exacerbate inflammation. One man appeared to have a seizure. "He just laid on the ground, twitching," Charles Robinson, an inmate in the barracks, said. "He almost suffocated."

A combination of smoke and tear gas drifted into an adjacent barracks, where all the inmates had tested positive for the coronavirus. Darrell Jones, who has been incarcerated for thirty-five years, realized that he needed to turn off the ceiling fan. "It was pulling the smoke in from the hallway," he told me. "People sounded like they were choking to death." The switch for the fan was just outside the barracks door. As he stepped through the doorway, a lieutenant shot him in the face with a rubber bullet. Jones's vision suddenly went dark, and he fell to the floor. "If you don't get back in the barracks," he heard an officer say, "I'm going to shoot you again." But he was too disoriented to move; blood streamed down his face from a wound less than half an inch above his left eye. Inmates dragged him inside and began pounding on the windows, saying that Jones needed a doctor. When no one came, Danzie, the

Think Tank member, cleaned the wound himself and got Jones into bed.

Five hours later, Jones was taken to the infirmary, where he heard a nurse say that his wound had "opened up like a flower." He was driven in a van to a hospital in Little Rock. For the eighty-mile drive, he lay across the back seat, behind a metal grille, with his hands and feet shackled. He was nauseated and had no vision in his left eye. At the hospital, Jones, who was not wearing a mask, informed staff that he had tested positive for the coronavirus. It was not the first time that officers, transporting positive inmates, had been cavalier about transmitting the virus. In an e-mail to all wardens on April 21st, Payne, the Division of Correction director, had written, "Hospitals are not wanting to treat our inmates because our staff are not following the guidelines."

Jones returned to the prison the next morning and, four days later, received a disciplinary violation. "Inmate was given several direct orders not to come out of the barracks but he disobeyed all orders while coming toward staff, posing aggression," the ticket said. Jones still can't see out of his left eye. If he keeps it open for more than twenty minutes, he gets a migraine.

At one of the Governor's daily press conferences, Payne acknowledged that there had been a "minor disturbance" at the prison. But, when asked if there were any injuries, he responded, "No."

Jones filled out a sick call in early May, but he is still waiting to see a specialist. He now spends his days in bed with his eyes closed, to keep his headaches at bay. He told me, "It's like they are trying to punish us for testing positive."

When Governor Hutchinson began holding daily coronavirus press conferences, he set apart the cases at Cummins. On April 19th, he presented a graph illustrating new infections in the past five weeks: cases were dipping, he reassured the public, if incarcerated people were removed from the equation. "The number that we will have coming out of Cummins dwarfs what we're having statewide," Hutchinson explained. "That's a reason, of course, to distinguish those in the reporting system."

"It hurt," Qadir told me. "Here it is, right now in 2020, and the Governor

doesn't even want us to be a statistic. Imagine that. If they don't count us when we're sick and dying, then we really are nobody." Another man in the Think Tank told me, "A lot of guys just shake their heads. They don't think they can change anything—the hopelessness is so big, so complex—so they'd rather not think about it."

In late April, lawyers for the Arkansas American Civil Liberties Union, Disability Rights Arkansas, and the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund filed a federal lawsuit, arguing that the Arkansas prison system had displayed deliberate indifference to prisoners' welfare. Fifty years after the system had been declared unconstitutional, inmates believed that they were still being subjected to cruel and unusual punishment. Resnik, the Yale professor, said that conditions had improved since the sixties, but she wondered, "Is it more weighty and terrible now because, even with prisoners having all these rights, the conditions are still debilitating?"

Cummins has had the tenth-largest coronavirus outbreak in the nation—nine hundred and fifty-six people, including sixty-five staff members, have tested positive—but the Division of Correction has made only minimal steps to contain it. The inmates aren't given access to alcohol-based hand sanitizer, even though the medical director of infectious diseases for the state's Department of Health has advocated for its use. "Maybe science will take precedence now in current situation," he wrote, in an e-mail to the secretary of the department. Men are still sleeping in open barracks, less than three feet apart. (A spokesperson for the Department of Corrections told me in an e-mail that if inmates in every other bed follow new instructions to sleep with their feet in the spot typically occupied by their heads, their faces will be "separated by 6 feet from the next inmate's pillow.")

The inmates asked that the prison system immediately take more precautions, including releasing some people to home confinement. One of their lawyers, Omavi Shukur, told me, "For so long, we've argued that the rate of population growth in prisons is unsustainable, and now that argument has become palpable." But Kristine Baker, a judge for the Eastern District of Ar-

kansas, denied the request, writing that federal courts should "approach intrusion into the core activities of the state's prison system with caution." The Arkansas attorney general had argued that the risks to prisoners were not "so great that they violate standards of decency," nor were they "ones that today's society does not tolerate."

Marie noticed that older men who were sick didn't bother asking for help. "They just stay on their racks," she said. "They know how it works. They just lay there." Some of the sickest inmates were placed in the visitation room, which had been converted into a makeshift hospital, where they had no access to showers or phones. A thirty-year-old man who spent several days there told me he was alarmed when an inmate who had tested negative for coronavirus was inexplicably moved in. The inmate kept trying to give officers paperwork documenting his test results. When that didn't work, he threatened to break the vending machines if he wasn't moved out of the room. One man, Roy Davis, died there, sitting in a wheelchair.

The Division of Correction began listing the number of coronavirus deaths on its Facebook page. There have been eleven at Cummins so far. On May 2nd, after two deaths in twenty-four hours, the Division noted that "both inmates were in their 60s and serving Life Sentences." Raynor felt that the men were



being described "like old cows. They were old, and we already milked them." Within hours of their deaths, their names were deleted from the Department of Corrections roster online.

In the absence of any funeral service, some of the younger men at Cummins gathered in small groups to share pictures and memories of Derick Coley, who was twenty-nine when he died. In a tribute online, Cheryl Tucker, who taught G.E.D. classes at Cummins, de-

scribed Coley as "one of the most enjoyable people I have ever known." He was set to go before the parole board this month.

On April 15th, he had been seen by a nurse who noted that he was too weak to walk and his blood-oxygen level was ninety, which would typically indicate that a patient should be hospitalized. Instead, Coley was sent to the Hole, where he remained for seventeen days. His vitals were never recorded again.

The men in neighboring cells became increasingly concerned. "They were telling the guards, 'He needs to go to the infirmary—he can't breathe,'" Coley's girlfriend, Cecelia Tate, who was raising an eight-year-old daughter with him, told me. "But the guards just kept walking by."

Another man who had been housed in the Hole told me, "Listen, these people are supposed to come every thirty minutes, but they weren't making any rounds. They might come every four hours, but they wouldn't even turn their heads unless you were calling their names." To get attention, he said, one inmate banged on his toilet, and, when that didn't work, he warned the others in the Hole to lift their belongings off the ground, because he planned to flood the floor. The man told me, "It makes perfect sense that Coley was lying back there dying, and no one ever noticed."

The last time Tate talked to Coley, three weeks before his death, she asked if he was planning to see a doctor. "I don't know if they're going to let me," he said. Tonya Morrow, who, until January, was a physician's assistant for Wellpath, at another Arkansas prison, told me that, when officers called about sick inmates, "nine times out of ten the nurses would say he's just faking it or trying to get out of something. If the officer says the inmate has been throwing up, the nurse will ask, 'Well, have you seen the inmate throw up? Until you see the inmate throw up, he can't come to the infirmary.'" Burrow, the former Wellpath nurse, told me, "It's a pride issue. The mentality of the infirmary is: these individuals are worthless." She said that new staff members quickly "built up a brick wall" in order to assimilate to the culture. Those who didn't were dismissed as "givers." "They would say, 'I can't believe you're falling for their games,'" she

said. (Burrow was terminated after making complaints about what she witnessed. Wellpath said that retaliation is against its policy, and denied that sick calls are shredded.)

Officers finally came to Coley's cell—not to check on him but to clear it so that someone else could move in. He was told that it was time to return to the general population. But, when he stood up, he collapsed. When a nurse arrived, he was lying on the floor, his lips pale. Several men watched through their windows as Coley, who had been handcuffed, was taken to the infirmary in a wheelchair. A man shouted Coley's name several times as he rolled by. He didn't respond.

The doctor on call, William Patrick Scott, advised the infirmary staff by telephone. (Scott's medical license has been suspended three times. In one instance, the state medical board concluded that he had "exhibited gross negligence and ignorant malpractice," by treating patients while intoxicated.) Coley was given chest compressions by the nurses, one of whom had been involved in the incident in which an inmate was allegedly choked with a telephone cord. According to the coroner's report, Coley was "worked on and then passed away."

The prison's chaplain told Tate she had two days to enlist a funeral home to claim Coley's body. Tate didn't have the money, so the state sent her his ashes.

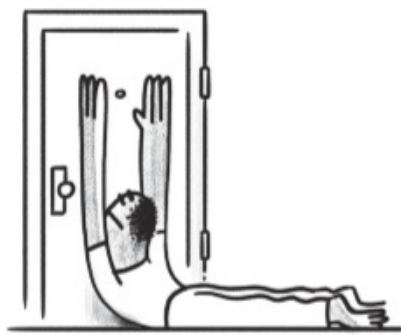
At the Governor's press conference on May 16th, Payne stood in front of a backdrop that read "Arkansas: Ready for Business," and announced good news from Cummins: there were only twelve positive cases. The rest, he said, were "considered to have been recovered." Based on my conversations with more than thirty inmates or their families, it seems that almost no one had been retested. They had simply had their temperatures taken. Some had been asked to put their fingers in a pulse oximeter, which measures blood-oxygen levels. In a letter to the Governor, Raynor wrote, "Watching a press conference witnessing your saying almost 900 people have recovered at the Cummins Unit and then I walk by a guy that can't get out of the bed makes me question my sanity level."

Meanwhile, at a state prison thirty-five miles from Cummins, there was a

new outbreak: two hundred and twenty-eight inmates had tested positive. One had already died.

In response to the pandemic, Hutchinson allowed six hundred and forty-eight prisoners who were serving sentences for nonviolent, nonsexual offenses, and were within six months of their release, to go home. Since February, twenty-six states have released more than twenty-seven thousand prisoners. The Think Tank was disappointed that a distinction was made—by nearly every political leader discussing the need for more space in prisons—between nonviolent offenders and violent ones. In 2008, Qadir had drafted a bill titled "Restoring Those Forgotten," which he sent to the Governor and several legislators. The bill proposed that men who, like him, had been sentenced to life without parole when they were twenty-one or younger should have the opportunity to prove that they had reformed. "In evaluating our penal system," he wrote in a petition accompanying the bill, "there is a very thin line between correcting and condemning a life." As Qadir expected, there was no response. Between 2012 and 2017, Arkansas's prison population grew more than any other state's, with the number of elderly prisoners rising more rapidly than any other age group.

Laura Fernandez, one of the lawyers representing the prisoners, reflected on the state's decision to count inmate infections separately. "It's like a Greek trag-



edy," she told me. "They don't realize this thing is coming right back at them." Jefferson County, which encompasses Pine Bluff—the city closest to Cummins—had, at one point, more deaths per capita from the coronavirus than any other county in the state. Lincoln County, where Cummins is situated, had the second-highest rate of cases in the nation.

Prisoners are hidden in most realms of life, but, when it comes to infectious disease, the harms of incarceration be-

come visible: political leaders must reckon with the fact that prisons are part of our communities. The boundaries of penitentiaries are porous: inmates come in and out, as do officers, medical staff, vendors, lawyers, and relatives. Diseases come in and out, too. The risk of tuberculosis, for instance, is twenty-three times higher inside prison walls—poor ventilation, social density, and minimal sun exposure are fertile conditions for the spread of disease—but cannot be contained within them. A 2015 study in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* found that in Dourados, a city in Brazil, more than half the cases of tuberculosis among people who had never been incarcerated were linked to strains of the disease inside the nearby prison.

Vivian Flowers, a state representative from Pine Bluff who contracted the coronavirus in late March, told leaders of the Division of Correction that she doubted their conclusion that the men at Cummins had recovered. (Last year, Flowers proposed a constitutional amendment to outlaw prison labor, but it was voted down.) Flowers wanted to be tested again before she returned to the Arkansas General Assembly, which was holding its meetings in a basketball arena, so two weeks after her first test she got another one: she still had the virus. Ten days later, she tried again. She was still positive, even though she hadn't had symptoms in twenty-three days. "This thing is still working its way around the prison," Flowers told me. "When the workers leave, they are going to bring it back home."

By the middle of May, the restrictions at Cummins had begun to ease. The men were told to eat in the cafeteria again, one barracks at a time. On D.B.'s first day back, he saw the warden, Aundrea Culclager, wiping tables herself. When an inmate asked if she was afraid of exposing herself to infected prisoners, D.B. heard her reply, "No, God got me." He said, "I wasn't impressed—I just thought it was sad. How can we progress when we got the warden of the whole prison not able to make big decisions, because she's doing a minimum-wage job?"

Qadir spent his first day back in the kitchen "assessing the damages." He told me, "Imagine your daughter playing with your makeup, and you come back to see the mess. That's what this was."

After the cafeteria opened, a field rider came into Raynor's barracks and said, "Y'all better start getting ready to go back to Hoe Squad." Raynor's job was doing laundry, but he shouted back, "We are never going back out there."

Later that day, Raynor, who has founded a small organization called Forgiveness, Reform, and Freedom, which fosters reconciliation between offenders and victims, was woken up by four officers. They put him in handcuffs. One officer sat on his bed, rifling through his belongings and throwing papers and clothes on the floor. "Why is all this aggression taking place?" Raynor asked. They didn't answer. They didn't find any contraband, but they led him out of the barracks and down the hallway to the prison's holding cells, where men had been urinating through the bars and defecating on the floor, since officers were coming too infrequently for them to go to the bathroom. As Raynor stood in front of the holding cells, he heard a lieutenant ask the other officers, "Why are we locking him up if he didn't do nothing?" They allowed Raynor to return to his barracks. He wondered if, after his comment to the field rider, he was being warned.

Some of the men I spoke with were afraid to use their names; they thought that they would be put in the Hole, or sent to the Hoe Squad, as punishment. When I asked Raynor why he chose to go on the record, he told me, "I want the men in here to know that someone they know was willing to sacrifice themselves for them." The coronavirus crisis, he said, had brought to the surface what most inmates had previously only sensed. "I always knew in the back of my mind: You don't care at all about us," Raynor said. "It's scary, because everything has come to fruition." He sees the prison as a "microcosm of America, with its own ghetto and suburbs"—the East Hall and the West Hall. He worries that one misguided act from an officer will cause the men on the East Hall to start rioting again. He said, "We suffer from things that we didn't even know we suffered from."

I noticed that the men in the Think Tank used convoluted rationalizations to make peace with punishments that they knew to be unjust. Danzie, who is black, was convicted by an all-white jury



"And don't come back."

of killing a white stranger, though it was unclear if the man was murdered (he was discovered in a ditch, and no weapon was ever found) and Danzie has always maintained his innocence. He, Qadir, and Raynor make sense of their life sentences by reminding themselves of unrelated wrongs that they committed as teen-agers, for which they were not tried. "I have to realize there's karma," Danzie said. "That's one of the reasons I give so much of myself to youth. Every time one of these guys go free, they are taking a piece of you with them. So eventually all of you will be free." Kaleem Nazeem, who was released in 2018, after twenty-eight years in prison, told me that, when people compliment him on his adjustment to freedom, he says, "You're looking at the student—the teachers are still locked up."

Qadir and Raynor reassure each other that they won't die in prison. "God is going to make a way out of no way," Qadir said. They share the same dream: if they are ever released, they will open their own organic farms. Raynor said, "Imagine me having forty acres and a catfish pond."

As they watched the protests following the death of George Floyd on the news, they felt that this alternative life might be within reach. The protesters, Qadir said, looked to him like babies, and that gave him hope. "The generation on the front lines doesn't know the fear of my generation," he said. "They don't know the fear of my mother's generation. They don't know the fear of our ancestors. And yet they still have the same spirit that I feel when I go before classification every year"—the annual process by which inmates are assigned jobs. They file into the classification office one at a time and stand on footprints etched into the floor. Majors who oversee different parts of the prison—the fields, the chickens, the cattle, the infirmary, the kitchen—sit at tables around them. "They look at you, size you up like a horse, and make bids on where you will work," Qadir said. "I get this gut feeling in my stomach: the blood that pumps into my veins is the blood of my forefathers." He went on, "Some people say, 'Don't question God.' I question him all the time: Help me understand so I can endure and be on the road to recovery." ♦



GRIEF *Scholastique Mukasonga*

On TV, on the radio, they never called it genocide. As if that word were reserved. Too serious. Too serious for Africa. Yes, there were massacres, but there were always massacres in Africa. And these massacres were happening in a country that no one had ever heard of. A country that no one could find on a map. Tribal hatred, primitive, atavistic hatred: nothing to understand there. “Weird stuff goes on where you come from,” people would tell her.

She herself didn’t know the word, but in Kinyarwanda there was a very old term for what was happening in her homeland: *gutsembatsemba*, a verb, used when talking about parasites or mad dogs, things that had to be eradicated, and about Tutsis, also known as *inyenzi*—cockroaches—something else to be wiped out. She remembered the story her Hutu schoolmates at high school in Kigali had told her, laughing: “Someday a child will ask his mother, ‘Mama, who were those Tutsis I keep hearing about? What did they look like?’ and the mother will answer, ‘They were nothing at all, my son. Those are just stories.’”

Nevertheless, she hadn’t lost hope. She wanted to know. Her father, her mother, her brothers, her sisters, her whole family back in Rwanda—some of them might still be alive. Maybe the slaughter had spared them for now? Maybe they’d managed to escape into exile, as she had? Her parents, on the hill, had no telephone, of course, but she called one of her brothers, who taught in Ruhengeri. The phone rang and rang. No one answered. She called her sister, who’d married a shopkeeper in Butare. A voice she’d never heard before told her, “There’s nobody here.” She called her brother in Canada. He was the eldest. If their parents were dead, then he’d be the head of the family. Perhaps he had news, perhaps he had advice, perhaps he could help her begin to face her terror. They spoke, and then they fell silent. What was there to say? From now on, they were alone.

From now on, she would be alone. She knew a few people from home, of course, friends she’d made at the university here, where she’d had to start her studies all over again, her African degrees being worthless in France. But

that little part of her—the part that still tied her to those she’d left behind in Rwanda, despite the distance and the time gone by and the impossibility of rejoining them—formed a bond that grounded her identity and affirmed her will to go on. That bond would fade, and in the cold of her solitude its disappearance would leave her somehow amputated.

She felt very fragile. “I’m like an egg,” she often told herself. “One jolt and I’ll break.” She moved as sparingly as she could; she lived in slow motion. She walked as if she were seeking her way in the dark, as if at any moment she might bump into an obstacle and fall to the ground. Climbing a staircase took a tremendous effort: a great weight lay on her shoulders. She found herself counting the steps she still had to climb, clutching the bannister as if she were at the edge of an abyss, and when she reached her floor she was breathless and drained.

She tried to find an escape in mindless household tasks. Again and again, she maniacally straightened her studio apartment. Something was always where it shouldn’t be: books on the couch, shoes in the entryway, Rwandan nesting baskets untidily lined up on the shelf. She was sure she’d feel better if everything was finally where it belonged. But she was forever having to go back and start over again.

If only she had at least a photograph of her parents. She rifled through the suitcase that had come with her through all her travels. There were letters, there were notebooks filled with words, useless diplomas, even her Rwandan identity card, with the “Tutsi” stamp that she’d tried to scratch away. There was a handful of photographs of her with her girlfriends in Burundi (which they’d had taken at a photographer’s studio in the Asian district in Bujumbura, before they parted ways, so they wouldn’t forget), there were postcards from her brother in Canada, a few pages of a diary she’d quickly abandoned, but she never did find a photo of her parents.

For that, she rebuked herself bitterly. Why hadn’t she thought to ask them to have their picture taken and send her a copy? Was she a neglectful daughter? Had she forgotten them as the years went by? No, they were still there

in her memory; she could call up their image anytime she liked. She sat down at her table, took her head in her hands, closed her eyes, focussed her mind, and pictured, one by one, all the faces that death might already have erased.

Then, toward the end of June, she got a letter. There was no mistaking where it had come from: the red-and-blue-bordered envelope, the exotic bird on the stamp, the clumsily written address. . . . She couldn’t bring herself to open it. She put it on her bookshelf, behind the Rwandan baskets. She pretended to forget it. There were so many more urgent and more important things to do: make dinner, iron a pair of jeans, organize her class notes. But the letter was still there, behind the baskets. Suddenly, she found herself tearing open the envelope. She pulled out a sheet of square-ruled paper, a page from a schoolchild’s notebook. She didn’t need to read the few sentences that served as an introduction to a long list of names: her father, her mother, her brothers, her sisters, her uncles, her aunts, her nephews, her nieces. . . . This was now the list of her dead, of everyone who had died far away from her, without her, and there was nothing she could do for them, not even die with them. She stared at the letter, unable to weep, and she began to think that it had been sent by the dead themselves. It was a message from the land of the dead. And this, she thought, would probably be their only grave, a column of names she didn’t even need to reread, because she knew them so well that they echoed in her head like cries of pain.

She kept the letter from her dead with her at all times. She never showed it to anyone. Whenever someone asked, “What happened to your family?”, she always answered, “They were killed, they’re all dead, every one.” When people asked how she’d heard, she told them, “I just know, that’s all. Don’t ask me anything more.” She often felt the need to touch that piece of paper. She gazed at the column of names without reading them, with no tears in her eyes, and the names filled her head with pleas that she didn’t know how to answer.

What she didn’t want to see: pictures on television, photographs in newspapers and magazines, corpses

lying by roadsides, dismembered bodies, faces slashed by machetes. What she didn't want to hear: any rumor that might summon up images of the frenzy of sex and blood that had crashed over the women, the girls, the children. . . . She wanted to protect her dead, to keep them untouched in her memory, their bodies whole and unsullied, like the saints she'd heard about at catechism, miraculously preserved from corruption.

Most of all, she didn't want to sleep, because to fall asleep was to deliver herself to the killers. Every night they were there. They'd taken over her sleep; they were the masters of her dreams. They had no faces; they came toward her in a gray, blood-soaked throng. Or else they had just one face, an enormous face that laughed viciously as it pressed into hers, crushing her.

No, no going to sleep.

Of course, she should have wept. She owed the dead that. If she wept, she could be close to them. She imagined them waiting behind the veil of tears, nearby and unreachable. Maybe that was why she'd gone so far away, why she'd headed off into exile: so that there would be someone to weep for all those whose memory the killers had tried to erase, whose existence they'd tried to deny.

But she couldn't weep.

"My father just died," one of her friends told her.

"I'll go to his funeral," she answered, without thinking.

She immediately regretted making that promise. Was it right for her to honor someone else's dead if she couldn't weep for her own? In her mind, she summoned up images of Rwandan women weeping over their lost loved ones, able to weep because the body was there in front of them, before it was buried. Yes, the women of Rwanda knew how to mourn. First, they wept sitting up very straight, still and silent, their tears falling like raindrops from eucalyptus trees. Then came the keening and the wailing; the women shivered and quaked, racked head to toe by violent sobs. Finally, they huddled beneath their pagnes, disappearing, soundless but for their sighs as they choked back their tears, and then even those slowly waned. Now the loved one could

enter the land of the dead. He'd got the tears he deserved, and although the pain of the loss was still there, you knew that it would slowly ease, that you'd be able to live with it, and that the lost loved one would leave a peaceful memory in the world of the living, a welcome memory—maybe that was what white people meant when they talked about "the grieving process." And, with that, the loved one was allowed to set off for his final home. The body was carried on an *ingobyi*, a long stretcher made of bamboo slats. The women would keep their eyes fixed on him, accompanying him on his voyage, as if lending him their support one last time before he was admitted to the other world, the unknown world of the spirits. The *ingobyi* also served as a bride's palanquin on her wedding day. She, too, was expected to weep. As she was taken from

her parents' house to that of her new family, her sobs—too loud to be sincere—showed everyone that she was leaving the paternal enclosure against her wishes. The *ingobyi* always demanded its tribute of tears.

She sadly recalled the little cemetery where she and her three fellow-refugees had liked to meet. This was in Burundi, in Bujumbura, at the seminary that had temporarily taken them in after they fled from Rwanda. In exchange for halfhearted hospitality, the four companions-in-exile did housekeeping, helped in the kitchen, served the abbots at dinner, washed dishes. They tried to ward off the insistent curiosity of the seminarians, who were made restless by the presence of girls. They were forever having to invent new excuses to turn down the abbots' invitations to come pick out a book or have

GEORGE FLOYD

You can be a bother who dyes
his hair Dennis Rodman blue
in the face of the man kneeling in blue
in the face the music of his wrist-
watch your mouth is little more
than a door being knocked
out of the ring of fire around
the afternoon came evening's bell
of the ball and chain around the neck
of the unarmed brother ground down
to gunpowder dirt can be inhaled
like a puff the magic bullet point
of transformation both kills and fires
the life of the party like it's 1999 bottles
of beer on the wall street people
who sleep in the streets do not sleep
without counting yourself lucky
rabbit's foot of the mountain
lion do not sleep without
making your bed of the river
boat gambling there will be
no stormy weather on the water
bored to death any means of killing
time is on your side of the bed
of the truck transporting Emmett
till the break of day Emmett till
the river runs dry your face
the music of the spheres
Emmett till the end of time

—Terrance Hayes

a talk in their rooms. When the siesta hour came, the girls went out into the garden to talk about all that had happened to them and to consider their uncertain future. Beyond the banana grove, they discovered a small forgotten cemetery with a handful of wooden crosses, whose white paint was peeling, the black letters of the names almost entirely faded. "Let's say a prayer," Espérance said. "You must always do something for the dead."

They returned to those graves day after day, hurrying out to the little cemetery early in the afternoon, as soon as the dishes were washed and the siesta hour had begun. It became their secret domain, their refuge, a safe place, far from the irritable stares of the miserly old nun, far from the indiscreet, ardent gazes of the abbots and the seminarians. They pulled the weeds from the graves and laid out purple flowers, cut from the bougainvillea that climbed the façade of the Father Superior's small house. "These could be our parents' graves," Eugénie said. "They may have been killed. Maybe because of us, because we left, they were killed." They stood side by side and held one another as you do for a Rwandan greeting. Then they burst into tears, and their shared lament brought them some comfort and solace.

They'd each chosen a grave to consider their own. Sometimes it belonged to their parents, sometimes to a brother, a sister, a fiancé. . . . And they mourned the absence of that loved one, or possibly the death, if he or she turned out to have been killed in reprisal for the girls' going away. The dirt was cracked and eroded from the heat and the rain, so they covered the graves with pebbles taken a handful at a time from the wide walkway that led to the calvary. They found a few slightly chipped vases in the sacristy, and they placed them before the crosses, which they'd carefully straightened. They filled the vases with flowers they'd borrowed from the altar of the Holy Virgin. And then, sitting by the graves, their arms around their legs, their chins on their knees, they silently let their tears flow, always on edge, fearing that a seminarian might happen onto them and mock them for their strange rituals.

Long after that little group of refu-

gees had gone their separate ways, she still missed the haven she'd found in that cemetery. And today she realized how much she wished she could be back by those strangers' graves, where she'd shed so many tears.

There was a sort of minivan, of a discreet, elegant gray, parked in front of the church. Two men in dark suits were waiting, bored, on the steps. She went in and tiptoed down the side aisle until she reached an empty seat with a view of the choir and the altar. There was a priest standing at a microphone, talking about the consolation of the afterlife. Nothing to do with her dead. She spotted her friend in the front row, no doubt surrounded by her family. She was shocked to see that the women weren't weeping, although some had red eyes, and she was sorry to find that they weren't draped in the elaborate mourning veils she'd seen in old photos. The men were all wearing solemn expressions that seemed forced to her.

Soon her eye was drawn to the coffin, which was sitting on a pedestal, armfuls of flowers laid out all around it. She couldn't help admiring the coffin's gleaming, polished wood, its handsome molding, its gilded handles. The old man, she understood, was lying in that padded box dressed in his best suit, and maybe, as she'd heard people say, they'd made up his face so they could tell themselves that death was only a restful sleep.



She began to hate that old man, who'd died a painless death, her friend had told her—"a good death," the friend had said, over and over. And as she stared at the coffin she felt as if she could see inside it, as if the wood had become transparent. And the body she saw in that silken, gently lit bubble was her father's body, dressed in the spotless *pagne* that marked him as an elder and the white shirt he wore for Sunday Mass. Suddenly she felt tears rolling down her

cheeks, and she heard a loud sob escape her. Now there was no stopping it. She let the tears flow; she didn't try to hold them back or wipe them away. It was as if a wave of solace had erupted from the very heart of her sorrow. She couldn't stop whispering the lamentation that accompanies the dead in Rwanda. She could feel her neighbors' uncomfortable, reproachful stares. She heard a murmur run through the rows in front of her and behind her. She fled, here and there jostling a kneeling woman as she hurried past. Her footfalls resounded against the stone floor as if to denounce her: what right did she have to weep for that man she didn't know, that man surrounded by a family who mourned him with a proper, polite sadness? She was a parasite of their grief.

She wished she could forget what had happened at the church: that vision of her father's corpse, her fit of tears. She avoided her friend so she wouldn't have to answer her questions. But a strange thought nagged at her, insistent, obsessive, telling her that her dead had given her a sign, and she was afraid to understand too clearly what they were trying to say to her. Nonetheless, she found that the long strolls she liked to take through the streets of the city inevitably brought her to a church, where she always hoped to see a gleaming gray or black hearse parked in front. More than once she did, and then an irresistible force drew her inside, with the crowd of mourners. She knew exactly where to sit: always behind a pillar, but with a view of the coffin. She stared at it long and hard, hoping she might once again see through the wood and find one of her dead inside it: her mother wrapped in her *pagne*, her younger sister in her schoolgirl dress. . . . It didn't always work, but the tears came every time. And she was convinced that, because she was there with them—those who had come to mourn a son killed in a traffic accident or a brother dead after what they called a long illness or a father felled by a heart attack—they would also weep for her dead, just a little. In exchange, she told herself, I'm sharing their sorrow for the one they lost. They can't possibly mind.

She thought that her dead wanted her to be present at funerals so that they, too, could have their share of mourning

and tears. In the past, she had never read the newspaper; now she opened it feverishly every morning to read the obituaries. She became a regular at the church near her apartment. That went on for some months, but eventually her strangely faithful attendance was noticed. One day, as she was trying to discreetly leave the church, a young priest stopped her outside the front door.

"Madame, please . . ."

She couldn't push him away, and she couldn't go back inside.

"Madame, please, allow me, I'd like a word with you. . . . I've noticed that you come to almost every funeral, and that you weep as if you knew the deceased. That can be upsetting for the families, for everyone who's suffered a loss. Perhaps I can help you? I'd like nothing more than to listen to you, help you . . . if there's anything I can do."

"No, let me be. I promise you'll never see me again."

She wandered the city streets, which had become a labyrinth of her despair, with no way out. She sensed that the very tenuous, very frail bonds that had connected her to her own dead through the losses of others were now broken forever. She felt herself sinking into an aloneness that would never end. All she had left was that piece of notebook paper, now tattered, and its list of names that she couldn't bring herself to read but whispered to herself over and over, like a hypnotic refrain of sadness and remorse.

She went home and tried to immerse herself in her most recent class notes, to neatly copy them out on a fresh sheet of paper, but she found the names of her dead filling the page. Now she was afraid: she was going to lose her mind, she had already lost her mind, these things she'd been doing weren't what her dead wanted at all. They weren't here, in this land of exile, in these foreign churches. They were waiting back home, in the land of the dead that Rwanda had become. They were waiting for her. She would go to them.

"**S**top," she told the driver. "This is the place. That's the path to my house, and if you keep going it takes you up to the eucalyptus plantings at the very top of the hill. And that hut over there at the side of the road, that's

Népomucène's cabaret. He sold banana beer and Fanta, even Primus sometimes, but not often. One time, I remember it to this day, my father bought me an orange Fanta when he came back from the market. He must have got a good price for his coffee."

"You really want to go there?" the driver said, sighing. "You know, it's no use. There's nothing left. It might not be good for you. In any case, you shouldn't go by yourself: you never know, you might run into a madman, and besides there are people who still want to 'finish the job,' so being there all alone, with those people who died up there . . ."

"I made a promise. Maybe I'll find what I've come here for. . . . I promised, I have to go."

"I'll come back this evening, before the sun goes down. I'll honk, and then I'll wait for ten minutes. Look, I have a watch just like you do, ten minutes, no more. I've got people waiting for me, too, at home."

"I'll be here. See you this evening."

The Toyota pickup drove off in a cloud of red dust, loaded with bananas, mattresses, sheet metal, maybe ten passengers, and a few goats squeezed in. The noise of the engine faded away. She spent a long moment looking around her. The dirt road snaked between the hillside and the swamp, but the shallows where her mother once grew sweet potatoes and corn were now clogged with reeds and papyrus. Népomucène's cabaret was a ruin, its flaking mud walls showing their skeleton of interlaced bamboo. The start of the path up the hill was half hidden by tall fronds of dried grass. For a moment, she wondered if this really was Gihanga. But soon she got hold of herself. She should have known that everything would be different: death had come to this place. It was death's domain now.

The hill was steep, but the path soon turned rocky, and the tangle of brush that slowed her down at first gradually thinned. She tried to make out what were once cultivated parcels of land in the thick growth that had invaded the hillside. The plots marked off for the coffee plants were easy to spot, but shaggy, dishevelled bushes bore witness to their abandonment. A few oversized, sterile manioc rose from the weeds, smothering the last stalks of sorghum.

Halfway up the hill, in the middle of deserted fields, a patch of almost impenetrable forest had survived. Fig trees towered over the sea of pointed dracaena leaves. Her father had told her that those were the vestiges of the enclosure of an old king. This place was now haunted by his *umuzimu*, his spirit, and he had perhaps been reincarnated in the python that guarded this sacred wood where no one dared set foot. "Stay away," the old ones said. "The python has been furious ever since the *abapadris* forbade us to bring it offerings. If you go near him, he'll swallow you!" She couldn't help thinking that this gloomy forest and its python were now the masters of the hill and would end up devouring her.

She reached the stand of banana trees, whose glossy leaves had once concealed the enclosure. Many of the trees had fallen and were dull brown with rot. The leaves of those still standing hung tattered and yellow. A few of them bore sad, stunted fruit.

She found her pace slowing as she neared the enclosure. She wasn't sure she'd have the strength to see this journey through to the end, to face firsthand what she'd already been told about. But now she was standing by the palisade. The wall of interlaced branches had collapsed and come apart, and what were once uprights were now shrubs with vigorous greenery or scarlet flowers, which struck her as indecent, as if, she thought, those simple stakes had been brought to life by the death of the people who had planted them. Nothing was left of the rectangular main house but a shattered stretch of wall. She searched for some trace of the hearth and its three stones, but she found only a little pile of broken tiles. She couldn't hold back a surge of pride: somehow her father had roofed his house with tiles! But she also observed that the killers had gone to the trouble of taking most of them away. They'd had all kinds of reasons for murdering their neighbors: the neighbors were Tutsis; they had a house with a tile roof. In the back courtyard, the three big grain baskets were slashed and overturned, and the calves' stable was a mound of ash and charred straw. Not wanting to break them any further, she took care not to walk on the shards littering the ground,

HOME HAIR STYLING FOR MEN



Peekaboo



Hold my beer



Doo-do



Nail-clipper cut



Topiary



The Rona



Zero gravity



All Three Stooges



Man baguette



Football



Mullet & mask

B. Blitt

all that remained of the big jugs the family had used to collect rainwater. Amid the debris of the collapsed awning that had once covered the hearth, she thought she saw a patch of fabric and hoped it might be a piece of her mother's *pagne*. But when she came closer she realized that it was only a yellowed taro leaf.

She knew she wouldn't find what she was looking for in the ruined enclosure. As soon as she'd got to the town, before heading to the hamlet of Gihanga, she'd gone to the mission church where the Tutsis had sought shelter, where they'd been slaughtered. Four thousand, five thousand, no one quite knew. Outside the front door she'd seen a little old man with a white beard and a broad, fringed straw hat sitting behind a wooden table. He was the guardian of the dead. He had a notebook in front of him. Visitors were invited to write a few words on their way out, as at an art gallery. The old man gave her a long stare, nodded, then finally said, "I know you—you're Mihigo's daughter. Did you come to see the dead?"

"Yes, they were calling me."

"You won't find them here. Here there's only death."

"Let me go in."

"Of course. Who could deny you that? I'll come with you, follow me, but then I have something to tell you."

"As you see," the old man said, "the *abapadris* and their houseboys washed everything clean. There's nothing left, not one drop of blood, not on the walls,

not on the altar. There may still be some in the folds of the Virgin Mary's veil, if you look closely. Once it was all cleaned up, the Monsignor came. He wanted Mass to be said here again, like before. All it would take was some holy water. But the survivors objected. They said, 'Where was your God when they were killing us? The white soldiers came to take the priests away, and He went off with them. He won't be back. Now the church belongs to our dead.' The mayor and the prefect agreed. It seems they're going to turn it into a house just for our dead—a memorial, they called it. I'll show you where our dead are waiting in the meantime."

He took a key that hung around his neck on a string and opened a door behind the altar, at the back of the apse. Beyond it was a vast, dark room stacked to the ceiling with large bags, like those used for carrying charcoal.

"These are for skulls," the guide said, pointing at the bags against the wall to his left, "and the ones straight ahead of you are for bones. We've got everyone who was here in the church, and all the bones we could find in the hills, left behind by the jackals and the abandoned dogs. Even the schoolchildren went to gather bones during vacations and days off. I hear there are going to be display cases, like at the Pakistani's shop in the marketplace. Your family's here in these bags, but no one can tell you whose bones are whose. You can make out only the babies' skulls, because they fit in the palm of your hand. But what I can tell you

is that your father isn't here. His bones are still up there where he lived, at Gihanga, but don't you go looking for them. They're someplace where you shouldn't see them. All right, let's go now, you don't have to write anything in the book—that book's for the *bazungu*, the white people, assuming they'll come, or for the grand gentlemen from Kigali in their four-by-fours. There's nothing for you to write. You're on the side of the dead. But let me tell you again: don't go looking for your father's remains, you mustn't see him where they left him."

She stepped over the back courtyard's broken fence and found herself in another banana grove, which seemed more overgrown than the one she'd just come through. But, even with the weeds, she could make out a path. It led to a thicket that exuded a horrible stench, veiled by a buzzing, humming fog of mosquitoes, gnats, and fat green flies. A black puddle had spread all around it, like stinking lava. Pallid, almost transparent worms twisted and writhed wherever the flood hadn't yet dried to a sickening crust.

She forced her way through the tall grass and sat down for a moment on the termite mound where people used to wait their turn every morning. The smell was almost more than she could bear. The air felt thick and heavy. She wasn't sure she could go on, wasn't sure she had the courage to climb the last few metres to that putrid thicket. But she told herself that she had to see this through to the end, that in just a few steps her journey would be over. She staggered up the final slope, tried to wave away the blinding mist of gnats, and bent over the side of the latrine. She thought she could see something shaped like a human body in the filth, and maybe—but surely this was an illusion—the horrible black glistening of what used to be a face. A violent nausea washed over her, and she vomited as she ran back to the termite mound. She closed her eyes, only to see once again what she'd just glimpsed in the latrine, that same fleshless face with its vile, viscous mask. She opened her eyes to make the vision of horror go away. She was sure that she would never again close her eyes without that monstrous face appearing from the deepest darkness. She ran down the hill and took



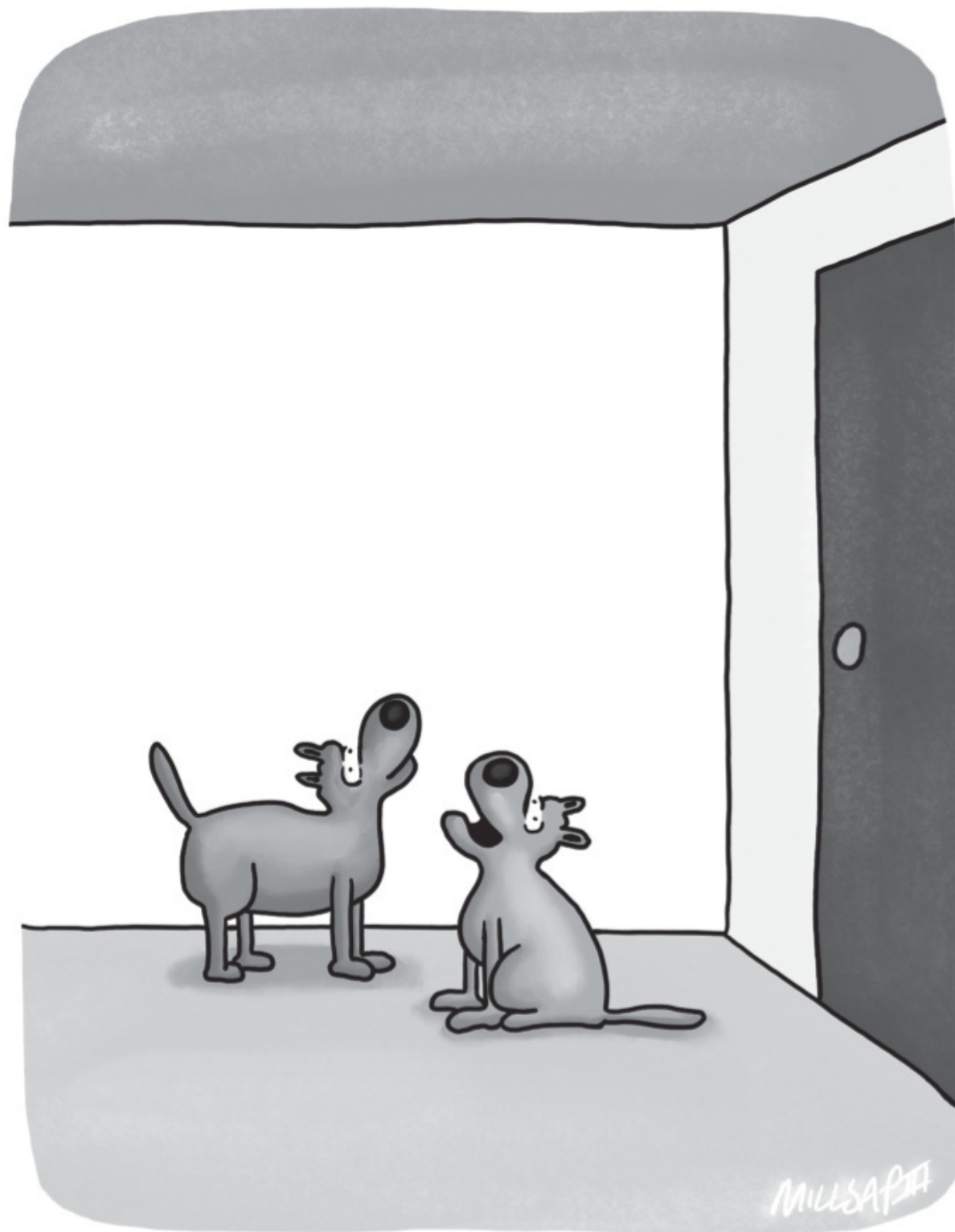
"Hold up—there are too many guys in there right now."

shelter amid the crumbling walls of Népomucène's cabaret, next to the road. To keep her eyes open, she stared at a bamboo rack, still dotted with a few clods of red clay. Trembling with fever and nausea, she sat there for hours, watching for the truck to come back, like a promise of deliverance.

All night long, she struggled against sleep in the room she'd rented at the mission, trying to hold back the flood of visions and nightmares that would wash her into their world of terror if she let herself drift off for even a moment. When the curfew hour came and the generator was turned off, the mission was submerged in pitch-darkness. She saw the glow of a fire through the narrow window: the watchmen warming themselves on this cold, dry-season night. She wished she could join them, hold out her hands toward the flames, talk with the men. But, of course, a girl couldn't mingle with strangers in the middle of the night. She remembered that she'd seen a hurricane lamp on the little table, and surely a box of matches next to it. She felt around for the matches, struck one, and lit the lamp's wick. It felt as though that trembling, blue-tipped flame were watching over her, keeping at bay the dark forces that lurked all around. She lay down on the bed and finally fell into a dreamless sleep.

There was someone in her room when she awoke. In the dim early-morning light, she recognized the guard from the church, sitting in the room's only chair.

"You went to your house in Gihanga," the old man said. "Don't tell me what you saw or thought you saw there. You went right through to the end. There's nothing beyond it, and no way out of it. You won't find your dead in the graves or the bones or the latrine. That's not where they're waiting for you. They're inside you. They survive only in you, and you survive only through them. But from now on you'll find all your strength in them—there's no other choice, and no one can take that strength away from you. With that strength, you can do things you might not even imagine today. Like it or not, the death of our loved ones has fuelled us—not with hate, not with vengeance, but with an energy that nothing can ever defeat.



"The people upstairs are talking about us. We should bark them another opera."

That strength lives in you. Don't let anyone try to tell you to get over your loss, not if that means saying goodbye to your dead. You can't: they'll never leave you, they'll stay by your side to give you the courage to live, to triumph over obstacles, whether here in Rwanda or abroad, if you go back. They're always beside you, and you can always depend on them."

Now the rising sun was illuminating her tiny room. She sat on the edge of the bed, elbows on her knees, head in her hands, listening. She let the guardian's words sink into her, and slowly despair loosened its grip.

They sat for a long while, looking at

each other in silence. Her visitor picked up a small gourd that he'd set down at his feet. He dropped a single straw into it. "I made this sorghum beer for the dead I watch over," he said. "Share it with them as I do."

He handed her the gourd and she sucked up the liquid. She closed her eyes. A gentle bitterness filled her mouth, like something she'd tasted long before.

"Now," the guardian of the dead said, "what is there for you to fear?" ♦

*(Translated, from the French,
by Jordan Stump.)*

NEWYORKER.COM

The author on mourning from exile.

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

DOUBLE EXPOSURE

Brit Bennett reimagines the literature of passing.

BY SARAH RESNICK

In 1954, a pair of identical twins—creamy skin, hazel eyes, wavy hair—flee a small town in Louisiana and the narrow future it affords: nothing but more of the same. Desiree and Stella Vignes are sixteen and headed to New Orleans. They scrape by for a while, and eventually Stella applies for a position as a secretary at a fancy department store, a job only white girls get. She doesn't mention she's black, and no one asks. She's apprehensive—has she done something wrong?—but her sister is adamant: why should the two of them starve “when Stella, perfectly capable of typing, became unfit as soon as anyone learned that she was colored?” Stella gets the job. Every morning, on the ride to the office, she transforms into her double, Miss Vignes—“White Stella,” as Desiree calls her—and every night she undergoes the process in reverse. It's “a performance where there could be no audience. Only a person who knew her real identity would appreciate her acting, and nobody at work could ever know.” For a while, the twins are brought together by the joint pleasure of pulling off the performance. But gradually the gap between them widens: “Desiree could never meet Miss Vignes. Stella could only be her when Desiree was not around.” One day, Stella disappears, leaving her sister a note: “Sorry honey, but I've got to go my own way.”

“The Vanishing Half” (Riverhead), the second novel by Brit Bennett, tells the story of the Vignes sisters' diverging paths. In doing so, it belongs to a long tradition of literature about racial

passing. From the antebellum period until the end of Jim Crow, countless black Americans crossed the color line to pass as white—to escape slavery or threats of racial violence, or to gain access to the social, political, and economic benefits conferred by whiteness. Narratives that dramatized this passage became a fixture of popular fiction, written by black and white, male and female authors alike. Charles W. Chesnutt, James Weldon Johnson, and Nella Larsen wrote about it, as did William Dean Howells and Kate Chopin. “Imitation of Life,” the 1933 novel by Fannie Hurst, was twice made into a movie (in 1934, by John M. Stahl, and in 1959, by Douglas Sirk). These stories repeat some version of a generic arc: the “tragic mulatto,” often a woman, chooses to leave home and pass for white; in time, anguished by the betrayal of her black identity, she returns to her family, only to be met with a harsh fate—sometimes death.

By the late twentieth century, the melodrama of these narratives—the predictable characters, the sad destinies—had mostly been cast aside. But in “The Vanishing Half” Bennett roots out these withered tropes and reanimates them in a fresh, surprising story. The novel begins thirteen years after the lives of the Vignes twins forked. Stella lives in an upscale subdivision in Los Angeles. Desiree has returned to the town that she and her sister fled. Stella is a housewife with a maid. Desiree is a waitress at the local diner. Stella has married a man who believes she is white and who knows nothing of her past: nothing of her great-great-

great-grandfather who was a slave to his own father; nothing of her father, who was lynched right in front of her. Desiree has left her husband, “the darkest man she could find,” and reunited with her first love. Both sisters have young daughters about the same age, and each has inherited her father's features: Kennedy has blond hair and blue eyes; Jude has “blueblack” skin.

Bennett is working within not one but two genres—drawing on the well-worn elements of passing literature as well as the oft-used device of long-lost twins—and she leans into their prescribed melodrama. Her omniscient narration roves among story lines, introducing us to a cast of stock characters: Barry, the drag queen; Peg, the women's libber; Blake, the white moderate voter; Sam, the violent patriarch; Loretta, the mother in a “respectable” black family. As Jude and Kennedy get older, they conform to types, too. Jude is a talented black athlete on scholarship at U.C.L.A., and Kennedy is a “rich bitch” living on her parents' dime. More than once, the plot turns on an outrageous coincidence.

But, as the novel unfolds, we begin to recognize how deftly Bennett is rearranging the generic pieces of her story. Her frictionless prose whisks us across a period of nearly forty years, the plot unwinding nonsequentially, a character's thought or action in the present rousing a story from the past. It is, to borrow an observation that Kennedy makes about how memory works, like “seeing forward and backward at the same time.” The electricity inside this space—past, present, and the stretch

ABOVE: LUCI GUTIÉRREZ



In “The Vanishing Half,” the story of two sisters divided by the color line yields new models of identity and authenticity.

between—comes from watching seemingly predictable characters collide in unexpected ways.

The narrative of passing inevitably confronts questions of performance: the dissonance between the authentic self and the projected self, the drama of seeing and being seen. But, in Bennett's novel, Stella, the archetypal passing figure, is hardly the only performer. All of Bennett's characters wrestle with the roles they have been assigned. The vital dynamic between actor and spectator yields different models of selfhood. Is identity something you take on, or something you take apart? Something you erect, or something you expose?

Stella's daughter, Kennedy, is an actress in the most conventional sense. At age eleven, she is cast as a Chinese railroad worker in a school play about the gold rush. She has only seven lines, but her mother helps her memorize them. Stella, who often seems dismayed at her child's mediocrity, is suddenly encouraging. "I mean, it was completely ridiculous," Kennedy remembers, years later. "You couldn't even see my face. But my mother told me I did a good job. She was . . . I don't know, she seemed excited for once." (The dramatic irony is potent: a supposedly white child is affirmed by her secretly black mother when she "becomes" Chinese.) By the time Kennedy conjures up this scene, she is a college dropout and a wannabe Broadway star, convinced that acting is "the only thing she was good at." Kennedy, who has never felt she truly knows her mother, or is known by her, sees acting as a way out: rather than contend with her mother's mysteries, she avoids them, opting to inhabit a succession of ready-made lives. "Acting is not about being seen," one teacher tells her. It's about "becoming invisible so that only the character shone through."

The teacher articulates a theory of acting—and of being a self—that hinges on erasure. For Kennedy, the joy of acting is in trying on a new identity; being successful at it, she discovers, means concealing one's own. One night, Kennedy experiences the sensation of leaving her body onstage, and calls it the "greatest performance she would ever give."

If effacement is one model of selfhood, Bennett's novel also contains an-

other. Many of her characters seek out an audience not to assume a fictionalized truth but to reveal an inner one. This ambition is all about exposure: we hear it in the phrase "coming out," which captures the trepidation of unveiling something vulnerable and honest. Barry, a high-school chemistry teacher during the week, becomes Bianca, a drag queen, on the weekends. He keeps his two lives separate. But, between performances, Barry "thought about [Bianca], shopped for her, planned for her eventual return"; she was always there, "lingering on the edge of his mind." Reese, one of Jude's first friends in Los Angeles, has been similarly torn between identities. He and Jude meet around Halloween, at a party, where, tellingly, each is wearing a literal disguise. She thinks Reese is cute, and finds excuses to visit him at work. Early in their friendship, which slowly becomes a romance, he tells her that he's trans. (Bennett sets this conversation in a darkroom—Reese dreams of being a professional photographer—playing with different notions of exposure.) Born in Arkansas as Therese, he ran away from home after his father caught him dressed up in a man's shirt and tie, kissing a girl. By the time Jude meets him, "no one could tell that he'd ever been her, and sometimes, he could hardly believe it either."

In some ways, Reese's story sounds uncannily like Stella's: an escape from a small town where everyone has already decided who you are; a fresh start in a city where no one knows your past. Jude herself is tripped up by these apparent similarities. When Reese asks whether she thinks about her missing aunt, Jude sounds bitter: "I mean, what kind of person just leaves her family behind?" The words are out of her mouth before she realizes that this is exactly what Reese has done.

But is it? When Reese makes the long drive from Arkansas to Los Angeles, from his old life to his new life, his becoming is described not as the perfection of a role but as the expression of a true self:

He cut his hair in Plano, hacking off inches in a truck stop bathroom with a stolen hunting knife. Outside of Abilene, he bought a blue madras shirt and a leather belt with a silver stallion buckle. . . . In Socorro, he began wrapping his chest in a white bandage, and by Las Cruces, he'd learned to walk again, legs wide, shoulders square. He told himself that it was safer to hitchhike this way, but the truth was

that he'd always been Reese. By Tucson, it was Therese who felt like a costume.

Reese is purposeful as he sheds Therese, aligning the way he self-identifies with the way he is perceived by the outside world. Stella, meanwhile, "had become white only because everyone thought she was." To herself, she admits that her performance is just that: "This life wasn't real."

But who decides what's "real," the actor or the audience? It's a tantalizing question, one that any performance exploits. In moments when we feel seen—the sort of "recognition scenes" that so much theatre turns on—reality can appear, however fleetingly, complete. In Bennett's novel, only those who accept the imperative of exposure seem to stand a chance of being seen. When Desiree leaves her marriage, her husband hires Early, a private eye, someone whose profession is to look. In one of the book's coincidental twists, he happens to be Desiree's first love. What initially sounds sinister—Early sneaking photos of her—becomes one of the novel's most poignant relationships: he watches *over* Desiree. Reese, too, wields a camera with care, snapping candid photos of Jude, even though she "felt vulnerable seeing herself through his lens." ("Finally," her grandmother says. "One good picture of you.")

Reese and Early reflect back the best versions of the women they admire. But identities can't, in the language of photography, be captured. As Jude changes—moving from one city and one dream to another—her mother is her constant audience. Not long after Jude's friendship with Reese turns into her first experience of love, she gets a phone call from her mother. "There's something different about you," Desiree says. Jude plays dumb. "Ma'am?" she replies:

"Oh, don't ma'am me. You heard what I said. There's somethin' different. I can hear it in your voice."

"Mama, there's nothing wrong with my voice."

"Not wrong. Different. You think I can't tell?"

Desiree sees through her daughter's show, but her act of exposure is an act of love. What's more, she sees what her daughter has not fully acknowledged herself, what is both painful and joyful to accept: Jude is becoming someone new. ♦

MEASURING MAN

Josef Mengele's malignant "science."

BY ADAM GOPNIK



Have we come, at last, to the end of morally instructive Nazis? After eight decades, Nazis may seem to have retreated into a class with orcs and cable-TV sharks, fantastic creatures representing evil, rather than historical figures who actually were evil. It is fine to say we should look past the History Channel Nazis—"Hitler and the Occult"—to the real thing, but there comes a time when the iconic imagination really does overwhelm the historical imagination. No one any longer objects to jokes about the Spanish Inquisition, which burned skeptics and Jews alive, but which exists now first of all as a Monty Python sketch ("Nobody expects

the Spanish Inquisition!"), while Henry VIII and the Tudors, who burned men, too, and brutalized thousands, are a soap opera before they are a sermon.

Two new books suggest that we may not have come to the end, and that, on the contrary, our struggle to understand how evil happens is still best helped by understanding how evil happened. The subject of David G. Marwell's "Mengele" (W. W. Norton) is one of the leading orcs: Josef Mengele, the Angel of Death at Auschwitz, who oversaw selections on the train ramp—sending some family members off to be gassed or worked to death, while conducting bizarre medical experiments on others—and who

then escaped scot-free to a secret life in South America. Mengele's name became synonymous with pure evil of the sinister, educated sort: the movie "Marathon Man," with Laurence Olivier as the Dustin Hoffman-torturing dentist, making dental visits difficult for a generation, was inspired by Mengele.

Marwell's life has much new to tell us, both about Mengele himself and, more significant, about the social and scientific milieu that allowed him to flourish. There is nothing surprising in educated people doing evil, but it is still amazing to see how fully they construct a rationale to let them do it, piling plausible reason on self-justification, until, like Mengele, they are able to look themselves in the mirror every morning with bright-eyed self-congratulation. Mengele, though he had a medical degree, thought of himself as a scientist. He trained as a physical anthropologist at the highest levels of German academia. The offspring of a solid Bavarian Catholic family—during his later years in exile, he wrote tearful memoirs about his mother's Catholic pieties—he studied in Bonn and Vienna, and, in 1933, worked in Munich, under the Scottish-German anthropologist Theodor Mollison. It was Mollison, Marwell writes, who "perfected a series of measuring and recording devices that helped to standardize and increase the precision of the essential measurements that were the basis of physical anthropology." Even in the early thirties, Mollison was an eager Nazi, and the particular kind of anthropology he taught turned very easily to a *völkisch* ideology; it was a purely descriptive science that easily lent itself to pseudoscience, what Stephen Jay Gould memorably dubbed "the mismeasure of man." Mollison became famous for his "deviation curves," graphs that seemed to show differences among racial kinds.

All ideas, and ideals, are capable of being twisted into their opposites. Religious doctrines preaching nonviolence and loving thy enemy quickly turn into a search for enemies not to love. The intention and its perversion are usually transparent. We even have a good word for this bad practice: hypocrisy. But scientific theories, which get their credibility from their ability to explain the action of a limited domain of objects, can explode into false models for unrelated

A pretense of empirical rigor armored the Nazis' study of racial difference.



"Why, yes, I am a writer."

subjects without conscious hypocrisy. The Darwinian idea of the struggle for existence, designed to explain the chiselling of birds' beaks, becomes in a generation the idea that poor people deserve to be poor. Einstein's idea that the measurement of time is relative can warp into the idea that morality is. The missteps can be hard to track. The perversion of a scientific practice takes a second; its rectification takes a semester.

The German anthropological practice of measuring people and typing them according to race, in which Mengele was trained, had, as the Columbia historian Andrew Zimmerman has shown, begun on a large scale half a century before Mengele was schooled in it. It was pioneered in the eighteen-seventies, under the direction of the impeccably liberal scientist Rudolf Virchow, who was a leading voice *against* anti-Semitism at the time, vying with a notorious anti-Semitic agitator for a seat in the Reichstag, and winning. And, indeed, dividing schoolchildren into "Blonds" (Nordic types) and "Brunets" (everyone else), Virchow found that "Brunets occurred among all the schoolchildren a bit more than 14 percent; among the Jews it was 42 percent." Looking at the numbers, we might think that there was remarkably

little measurable uniformity among Jews. But people make numbers mean what they want them to mean, as in baseball negotiations, and in this case the numbers were taken to mean that the Jews were not subtly different but utterly Other. Analyzing the numbers with sufficient acuity to see what they really did or didn't show was complicated, like explaining why high batting averages aren't a good guide to winning baseball games: you have to be willing to hang around for the explanation, rather than rushing to sign the contract. And so the idea of objectifying standards of human measurement was easily married to the (anti-Darwinian) idea that what you were measuring was not individual variations but racial essences—that races were like species, and came in fixed, unchanging kinds, discernible and deducible from fixed measures.

Mengele, studying human mandibles under Mollison's supervision, concluded that "the jaws of the examined racial groups indicate in their front sections such distinct differences that they permit one to distinguish between the races." It was like trying to study the internal-combustion engine by surveying all the parked cars on a street. You would end up with a significant-seeming taxonomy

of windshield sizes and bumper dents, but you would have no idea that they all had the same motor inside, much less how it worked.

Even by the politicized standards of the field, Mengele was a mediocre student. His doctoral thesis, Mollison judged, though it "suffers from a somewhat clumsy manner of presentation and expression, may be described as fulfilling the requirements"—academese, in any era, for a B-minus. Mengele was good enough to study with the big names and win their support, but not good enough to go far in their world.

He went on to write another doctoral dissertation, in medical genetics, studying the heritability of cleft palates, which reinforced Nazi legislation requiring the sterilization of Germans with genetic disorders. By the late nineteen-thirties, he had been put to work as an expert consultant on racial types, evaluating such variables as blood types, eye color, eyebrow shapes, and fingerprints, to determine if a subject in a court case was a full Jew or a half Jew. In one instance, a Jew named Heinz Alexander was accused of the racial crime of miscegenation for having had an affair with an Aryan. He defended himself by insisting that he was not, in fact, fully Jewish but the bastard of an Aryan father. (Mengele wasn't convinced.)

Reading about Mengele's prewar training, one is struck by the enormous investment of resources, intellectual and financial, that was poured into this weirdly minute and futile science of racial difference. When Mengele, newly enlisted in the S.S. on the brink of war in 1938, sought to marry a twenty-one-year-old named Irene Schönbein, the Racial Office of the S.S. traced her ancestry back to 1648 to look for any signs of non-Aryan taint, and, unable to confidently establish the racial identity of her paternal grandfather, refused to enter her into its "clan registry." (Nazi rules about "racial purity" were inspired by, but did not go as far as, American "one drop" and "blood fraction" laws, enacted in the South, which stipulated that even a remote black ancestor rendered an individual nonwhite. As with Hitler's likening of his conquest of the East to the American conquest of the West, our worst history encouraged the Nazis' worst instincts.)

Racism doesn't, one would think,

normally demand quantitative data on quite this scale in order to prosper. Anti-Semitism in medieval times managed with gossip about blood-based matzo. But this racial stuff was not merely instrumental; it was obsessive. The Nazi intelligentsia really *believed*. An obsessive anatomy and a specialized language of racial difference created an essential intellectual armor, a shield from scrutiny. An alternative intellectual universe was constructed, with its own sciences and academic establishment, to insure that everyone involved would see himself as normal, as a scientist doing science. It was this self-sealing intellectual wholeness that distinguished the Nazis from the commerce-minded conservatives with whom they often allied, and eventually consumed. Mengele's career is a reminder that Nazism was not, as the left long insisted, capitalism with the gloves off. It was craziness with a white coat on—a faith driven, as most big historical movements are, by passionate ideas, not parsable interests.

Mengele, after serving with the Waffen S.S. Viking division—creepy even by Nazi standards, it was made up largely of foreign Aryan volunteers—was finally posted to Auschwitz, in May of 1943. This was regarded as a plum assignment for S.S. troops; you could kill people there without the threat of being killed. Once in Auschwitz, Mengele became famous as the worst of villains precisely because he seemed to love his job. Tributes to his calm spirits and good humor morbidly fill the pages of recollections, including those of the Jewish scientists who were press-ganged into his service.

Marwell does show, however, that Mengele gets the “credit” for more selections than he could possibly have made on his own. As one survivor wrote, “If a member of the SS is repeatedly named in public in connection with especially monstrous deeds, it is possible that survivors will project their experiences on to him. . . . More than once I heard survivors say that Mengele did this or that to them, even though Mengele had not yet arrived in Auschwitz at the time.” Crimes committed by the entirety of the Auschwitz staff were ascribed to him. He appears to have been singled out because of the sinister

calm and scrupulous care with which he approached the task of sorting out the soon-to-die from the (briefly) saved, a sangfroid that he maintained, as one less confident colleague suggested, because he alone accepted that all of the Jews were already “dead upon arrival.” He was sorting out ghosts, not people.

It was Mengele's conduct of experiments that made his reputation for pure evil so potent. He established his own research institute at Auschwitz, affiliated with a traditionally respectable academic one, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, in Berlin. And his sincerely constructed carapace of normal science is what makes the work especially chilling. His notorious twin studies, for example, have often been imagined to be wild efforts to increase German fecundity by finding a secret method by which all German women would have twins. In fact, Marwell shows, these studies were a continuation of the kind of research that was going on elsewhere in the world. Identical twins were widely seen as the Rosetta stone of genetics, which would allow scientists to crack the code of culture versus nature. Working with an equally appalling woman scientist named Karin Magnussen, Mengele “harvested” eyes from Sinti twins in the camp who had a condition called heterochromia of the iris, resulting in eyes with different colors. The aim was not one of fiendish engineering, to change eye color, which would have been merely cosmetic. No, it



was to collect hard data in advance of discovering “the applied genetics” of “paternity and ancestry determinations,” which would sort out *Übermenschen* from *Untermenschen*. Mengele's work in Auschwitz was what we would call “pure research.” Marwell, who clearly did not entirely expect to find what he did find, writes:

He pursued his science not as some renegade propelled solely by evil and bizarre impulses but rather in a manner that his mentor and his peers could judge as meeting the high-

est standards. . . . The notion of Mengele as unhinged, driven by demons, and indulging grotesque and sadistic impulses should be replaced by something even more unsettling. Mengele was, in fact, in the scientific vanguard, enjoying the confidence and mentorship of the leaders in his field. The science he pursued in Auschwitz, to the extent that we can reconstruct it, was not anomalous but rather consistent with research carried out by others in what was considered to be the scientific establishment.

To this, one might add a single footnote: the German “scientific establishment” had long ago sold its soul, and measuring stick, to the Devil. The scientists in Berlin and Graz who readily accepted disembodied heads and eyes and skeletons from Mengele's institute had been morally corrupted long before the samples arrived. No one suggests that Mengele's twin or eye-color research was of lasting value, despite its diabolical origins. (This might be said, for instance, of the Nazis' rocket research: the science was sound, even if the missiles went to the wrong cities.) The genetics of eye color was never going to be cracked by the gruesome business of collecting a lot of eyes. The anthropologists in Berlin and Munich had already convinced themselves that their fanatic inventorying and artifact-collecting impulse was so virtuous that it made questions of morality empty. Mengele was not, it turns out, a mad scientist. It was worse than that. He was participating in a mad science.

Marwell surveys, with a kind of aghast wonder, the comforts of life for Nazi doctors living amid so much death. They had a special “subcamp,” twenty miles from the gas chambers, that served as a rustic retreat. There were regular conjugal visits, and a steady flow of dinner parties among the S.S. officers and their wives. All this as the smoke rose in the camp nearby. Mengele was happy in this world—photographs show him smiling, and even the inmate-slave who drew his baths called him “polite.” Whenever some sense of morality intruded on this tightly enclosed communal sphere, the special unity of the bad actors held the group together. Again and again, the S.S. leaders, from Himmler on down, emphasized to their followers that they had already crossed the bar: if they failed in their task, the children of the survivors would come for them. It is the collective logic of all extremism. Within a group of killers, only acts of sadistic cruelty in

which all are made to join can guarantee solidarity. And so we see the omnipresence of hazing rituals among motorcycle gangs and mafiosi: you make your bones by burning your bridges. The fanatic leader convinces his adherents not that this is the only way forward but that there is no way of turning back.

Mengele's flight from Europe after the war was startlingly slow. Stopping off in Munich, perhaps to collect records of his research which he had sent on from Auschwitz, he spent more than three years under an assumed name as a hired hand at a Bavarian farm. (One of perhaps a hundred bitter ironies in his post-Auschwitz life: most S.S. men, like their victims, had been tattooed, in their case to receive the right blood type if they were wounded and needed a transfusion. This made them easy to identify after the war, but Mengele had managed to evade the marking, probably out of vanity.)

He made his way, in 1949, to South America, with the help of the Red Cross—along with the Catholic clergy's "ratline," one of the two most efficient escape routes for ex-Nazis—obtaining a passport more or less on demand. Once he arrived in South America, moving from Argentina to Paraguay and eventually settling in Brazil, he was protected by a makeshift network of German and Austrian expats. Mengele shared a coffee-and-cattle operation for years in Brazil with a Hungarian couple who kept his secret in exchange for a new farm, paid for by his protectors.

The Israelis tried to keep track of him, but never tried to kidnap him. This was, in part, a matter of politics. No doubt Israel had to balance its desire to capture war criminals against the price of alienating potentially helpful South American governments. And, logistically, Mossad, like any government agency, had limited means and many missions. Infuriatingly, Mengele's life on the run did not include much running: he managed the farm, kept a wary eye on his imagined pursuers, and had plenty of time to get married, go on holidays, and even correspond regularly with his son, Rolf, who lived in Germany. Mengele died in 1979, during one of those holidays; he had a stroke while swimming.

His friends buried him, under his as-

sumed name of Wolfgang Gerhard, and then, pressured by the West German and Brazilian police, disclosed the location of his grave. But the Germans and the Israelis—as well as Americans, who by now had taken up the Mengele hunt, at the political urging of the New York senator Al D'Amato—were unconvinced that they had the right corpse. They gave Mengele and his associates too much credit for fiendish movie-style secrecy—extensive plastic surgeries and faked deaths—when he had mostly been kept safe by lassitude on the part of his pursuers and moral indifference on the part of his protectors.

In June of 1985, teams of pathologists, forensic anthropologists, and other investigators from both Germany and the United States—including Marwell himself, working for the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations—descended on São Paulo to determine if the body was indeed Mengele's. In the strangest irony, the methods used to identify the criminal were essentially versions of the physical anthropology that Mengele had been trained in. Measurements were taken, the pubic symphysis was examined for wear; femurs were cross-sectioned, and ribs were inspected to assess how "cupped" they had become. Finally, the Germans introduced a brand-new technique: two high-resolution videos—one of the corpse's skull, the other of a photograph of Mengele when alive—were superimposed. It *was* Mengele, and "closure," that strange beast, was captured at last. All that microscopic Teutonic precision was now directed not to the malignant fantasy of creating racial categories but to distinguishing one man from all others. What exists is individuals, and what we can capture is their quiddities; the larger collectivities—of nation, class, mind, character—to which they belong are still too manifold for measurement.

Götz Aly, the German historian whose "Hitler's Beneficiaries" is one of the more highly praised works on the Third Reich published in the past two decades, has just brought out a new book in English, "Europe Against the Jews: 1880-1945" (Metropolitan), and it throws some postscript-like light on the Mengele case. Aly has two motives in writing his book. First, to show just

how widespread, pan-European, and ideologically complete European anti-Semitism was. From France through Poland and on into Romania and Hungary, each country had, in the nineteenth century, an anti-Semitic establishment, often anchored in the Catholic right but just as often in the Socialist left, which was, in its language, as virulent as the later, Hitlerian kind. Anti-Semitism that envisioned the removal and, implicitly, the extermination of the Jews was everywhere. Nobody needed encouragement to persecute Jews. The circumstances of war made it possible, but many, throughout Europe, had been eager to do so as soon as they could.

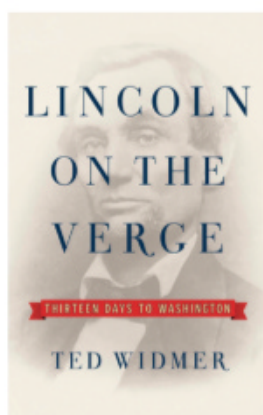
His second line of inquiry is more subtle: *Why* did they want to persecute the Jews so badly? He distinguishes classic medieval-style anti-Semitism, in which Jews were simply aliens, from a modern strain, in which they had become, unacceptably, *better*s. A new sort of competition had arisen in which the Jews had seized a first-mover advantage. In the nineteenth century, they arrived, before anyone else, at an understanding that, in the new world of modernity, competitive advancement—doing well on exams—would provide an alternative to advancement through bloodlines. Why the Jews did so well in societies that depended on some form of test-taking is a complicated historical question, though it may be as simple as that the tradition of Talmudic study could easily be "exapted" for the purpose. Paradoxically, only when the "national" groups entered this competition themselves and began to catch up did their hatred of the Jews take on a new ferocity. "As the gap in education closed, the degree of friction between Jews and majority populations increased," Aly writes. "Envy is born of social proximity, not of the distance between two cleanly separated groups."

The 1894 Dreyfus case, the original falling domino of what was to come, fits this pattern perfectly, and it makes sense that it happened in France, the first European nation to insure "careers open to talent." Captain Dreyfus's great sin was not being a Dreyfus but being a captain. And though Aly doesn't cite this instance, his scheme maps perfectly onto the lives of the Nazis: Hitler was enraged at the Jews in Vienna not because Jews were practicing the arts instead of agriculture

but because they wouldn't let him into art school. Goebbels was a failed philosophical novelist, not a rabble-rouser. The circles of populist authoritarians, then and now, tended to be filled with embittered B-minus competitors.

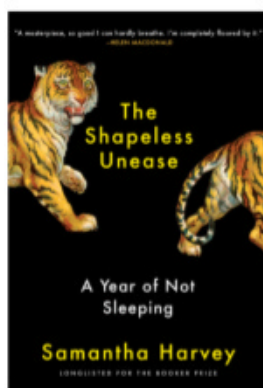
And so we come to the last and still the most morally instructive thing about studying the Nazis now: we can see how tightly the elimination of the Jews was bound to a hatred of cosmopolitanism. Although huge numbers of the Jews who perished in the mass killings were poor religious Jews from Eastern Europe, many peasants and peddlers and small merchants, the main enemy, as Mengele understood, had always been the educated Jews of Western Europe. When an S.S. doctor wondered aloud why all the poor Jews of the East had to be killed, he recalled Mengele explaining that "it was precisely from this reservoir of people that the Jews drew new power and refreshed their blood. Without the poor but supposedly harmless Eastern Jews, the civilized West European Jews would not be capable of survival. Therefore, it is necessary to destroy all Jews." The masses of poor religious Jews in Poland were almost accidental to the effort; the real target was the élite, who brought with them the bacillus of cosmopolitanism.

In Tom Stoppard's great new play, "Leopoldstadt," the study of a thoroughly assimilated Jewish family which begins in Vienna's golden period before the Great War—a Star of David sits atop their Christmas tree—the final, shattering scene is set in the nineteen-fifties. A man whose immediate family escaped in time comes home and asks, happily, about the relatives he had known as a boy. He lists one name after another: Ernst? Auschwitz. Hanna? Auschwitz. All his flawed and idiosyncratic relatives turn out to have been murdered by the Menges of the world. The audience, unique in my experience, is silent at the end, almost unable to applaud the actors. But the invocation is exact: it was the destruction of such harmless and happy Viennese cosmopolitan families that Hitler, who discovered anti-Semitism as a cure-all for his frustrations as a young and unsuccessful artist in Vienna, most desired. He was willing to destroy European civilization in order to achieve it, and he did. ♦

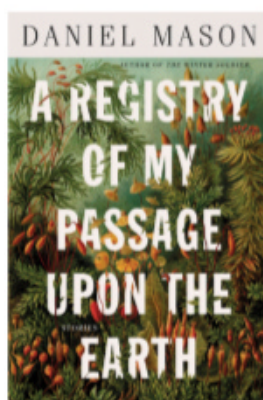


BRIEFLY NOTED

Lincoln on the Verge, by Ted Widmer (Simon & Schuster). In February, 1861, crowds in eight states greeted the train carrying Abraham Lincoln, as President-elect, from Springfield, Illinois, to the nation's deeply divided capital. In an account of some hundred speeches and countless handshakes that occurred along the way, Widmer, a former White House speechwriter, traces Lincoln's rapid growth as a statesman. The train draws "wild multitudes" both in towns "awakened" to the anti-slavery cause and in those whose allegiance is uncertain, and Lincoln is shown ably working the press to rally support. Widmer portrays a politician who has a populist touch but exercises this power responsibly, achieving what Frederick Douglass later called "wonderful success in organizing the loyal American people for the tremendous conflict before them."



The Shapeless Unease, by Samantha Harvey (Grove). This experimental memoir of a year plagued by insomnia moves between vivid descriptions of sleepless nights and meditations on consciousness, death, and the nature of time. Harvey captures the gravity of her affliction ("I go up to bed at night, I get beaten up, I come downstairs in the morning"), while also maintaining levity and grace. Sometimes she watches Netflix, half dreaming about what she sees; at other times her eddying mind bumps into ideas about the universe ("Everything is made up of space and is more space than it is form"). Her forays offer an engrossing vision of how our lives are knit together—day to day, night to night, and thought to thought.



A Registry of My Passage Upon the Earth, by Daniel Mason (Little, Brown). The characters in these robust short stories, set mostly in the nineteenth century, struggle as captains of their destinies. A doctor increasingly believes his body to be inhabited by an "imposter"; a Frenchwoman takes a hot-air balloon to new heights, hoping to find "a tear in the very fabric of the heavens." In the only story that takes place in present-day America, the narrator remembers an uncle, an immigrant from Eastern Europe, who became a fan of Civil War reenactments and of WrestleMania—confrontations with predetermined outcomes. "I wonder whether there was something about the cartoon violence that served as a parody of all violence, and perhaps as a catharsis for the real kind that he'd seen," the narrator writes.



Clean Hands, by Patrick Hoffman (Atlantic Monthly). This sly thriller begins during rush hour at Grand Central Terminal, when a junior associate at a law firm is pickpocketed and his phone, full of incriminating documents about a major bank, is passed through a chain of petty criminals. A blackmailer gets hold of the documents and the law firm, in the hope of tracking the phone, hires Valencia Walker, a former C.I.A. officer, who marshals a seemingly inexhaustible network of ex-military and law-enforcement types. The plot is fast-paced, and its twists—Walker's motivations are as suspect as everyone else's—lead ever deeper into corporate intrigue and government espionage.

A CRITIC AT LARGE

EVERYTHING THAT RISES

How racist was Flannery O'Connor?

BY PAUL ELIE



In 1943, eighteen-year-old Mary Flannery O'Connor went north on a summer trip. Growing up in Georgia—she spent her childhood in Savannah, and went to high school in Milledgeville—she saw herself as a writer and artist in the making. She created illustrated books “too old for children and too young for grown-ups” and dryly titled an assemblage of her poems “The Priceless Works of M. F. O'Connor”; she drew cartoons and submitted them to magazines, noting that her hobby was “collecting rejection slips.”

On her travels, she and two cousins visited Manhattan: Chinatown, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Columbia Uni-

versity. Then they went to Massachusetts, and visited Radcliffe, where one cousin was a student. O'Connor disliked both schools, and said so in letters and postcards to her mother. (Her father had died two years earlier.) Back in Milledgeville, O'Connor studied at the state women's college (“the institution of higher learning across the road”). In 1945, she made her next trip north, enrolling in the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she dropped the Mary (it put her in mind of “an Irish washwoman”) and became Flannery O'Connor.

Less than two decades later, she died, in Milledgeville, of lupus. She was thirty-nine, the author of two novels and a

book of stories. A brief obituary in the *Times* called her “one of the nation's most promising writers.” Some of her readers dismissed her as a “regional writer”; many didn't know she was a woman.

We are still learning who Flannery O'Connor was. The materials of her life story have surfaced gradually: essays in 1969, letters in 1979, an annotated Library of America volume in 1988, and a cache of personal items deposited at Emory University in 2012, which yielded the “Prayer Journal,” jottings on faith and fiction from her time at Iowa. Each phase has deepened the portrait of the artist and furthered her reputation. Southerners, women, Catholics, and M.F.A.-program instructors now approach her with devotion. We call her Flannery; we see her as a wise elder, a literary saint, poised for revelation at a typewriter set up on the ground floor of a farmhouse near Milledgeville because treatments for lupus left her unable to climb stairs.

O'Connor is now as canonical as Faulkner and Welty. More than a great writer, she's a cultural figure: a funny lady in a straw hat, puttering among peacocks, on crutches she likened to “flying buttresses.” The farmhouse is open for tours; her visage is on a stamp. A recent book of previously unpublished correspondence, “Good Things Out of Nazareth” (Convergent), and a documentary, “Flannery: The Storied Life of the Writer from Georgia,” suggest a completed arc, situating her at the literary center where she might have been all along.

The arc is not complete, however. Those letters and postcards she sent home from the North in 1943 were made available to scholars only in 2014, and they show O'Connor as a bigoted young woman. In Massachusetts, she was disturbed by the presence of an African-American student in her cousin's class; in Manhattan, she sat between her two cousins on the subway lest she have to sit next to people of color. The sight of white students and black students at Columbia sitting side by side and using the same rest rooms repulsed her.

It's not fair to judge a writer by her juvenilia. But, as she developed into a keenly self-aware writer, the habit of bigotry persisted in her letters—in jokes,

A habit of bigotry, most apparent in her juvenilia, persisted throughout her life.

asides, and a steady use of the word “nigger.” For half a century, the particulars have been held close by executors, smoothed over by editors, and justified by exegetes, as if to save O’Connor from herself. Unlike, say, the struggle over Philip Larkin, whose coarse, chauvinistic letters are at odds with his lapidary poetry, it’s not about protecting the work from the author; it’s about protecting an author who is now as beloved as her stories.

The work largely deserves the love it gets. O’Connor’s fiction is full of scenarios that now have the feel of mid-century myths: an evangelist preaching the gospel of a Church Without Christ outside a movie house; a grandmother shot by an escaped convict at the roadside; a Bible salesman seducing a female “interleckshul” in a hayloft and taking her wooden leg. The late story “Parker’s Back,” from 1964, in which a tattooed ex-sailor tries to appease his puritanical wife by getting a life-size face of Christ inked onto his back, is a summa of O’Connor’s effects. There’s outlandish naming (Obadiah Elihue Parker), blunt characterization (“The skin on her face was thin and drawn as tight as the skin on an onion and her eyes were gray and sharp like the points of two icpickers”), and pungent speech (“Mr. Parker . . . You’re a walking panner-rammer!”). There’s the way the action hurtles to an end both comic and profound, and the sense, as she put it in an essay, “that something is going on here that counts.” There’s the attractive-repulsive force of religion, as Parker submits to the tattooer’s needle in the hope of making himself a holy image of Christ. And there’s a preoccupation with human skin, and skin coloring, as a locus of conflict.

O’Connor defined herself as a novelist, but many readers now come to her through her essays and letters, and the core truth to emerge from the expansion of her body of work is that the nonfiction is as strong and strange as the fiction. The 1969 book of essays, “Mystery and Manners,” is both an astute manual on the craft of writing and a statement of precepts for the religious artist; the 1979 book of letters, “The Habit of Being,” is bedside reading as wisdom literature, at once companion-

able and full of barbed, contrarian insights. That they are books was part of O’Connor’s design. She made carbon copies of her letters with publication in mind: fearing that lupus would cut her life short, as it had her father’s, she used the letters and essays to shape the posthumous interpretation of her fiction.

Even much of the material left out of those books is tart and epigrammatic. Here is O’Connor, fresh from Iowa, on what a writing program can do for a writer:

It can put him in the way of experienced writers and literary critics, people who are usually able to tell him after not too long a time whether he should go on writing or enroll immediately in the School of Dentistry.

Here she is on life in Milledgeville, from a 1948 letter to the director of Yaddo, the writers’ colony in upstate New York:

Lately we have been treated to some parades by the Ku Klux Klan. . . . The Grand Dragon and the Grand Cyclops were down from Atlanta and both made big speeches on the Court House square while hundreds of men stamped and hollered inside sheets. It’s too hot to burn a fiery cross, so they bring a portable one made with electric light bulbs.

On her first encounter, in 1956, with the scholar William Sessions:

He arrived promptly at 3:30, talking, talked his way across the grass and up the steps and into a chair and continued talking from that position without pause, break, breath, or gulp until 4:50. At 4:50 he departed to go to Mass (Ascension Thursday) but declared he would like to return after it so I thereupon invited him to supper with us. 5:50 brings him back, still talking, and bearing a sack of ice cream and cake to the meal. He then talked until supper but at that point he met a little head wind in the form of my mother, who is also a talker. Her stories have a non-stop quality, but every now and then she does have to refuel and every time she came down, he went up.

Reviewers of O’Connor’s fiction were vexed by her characters’ lack of interiority. Admirers of the nonfiction have reversed the charge, taking up the idea that the most vivid character in her work is Flannery O’Connor. The new film adroitly introduces the author-as-character. The directors—Mark Bosco, a Jesuit priest who teaches a course on O’Connor at Georgetown, and Elizabeth Coffman, who teaches film at Loyola University Chicago—draw on

a full spread of archival material and documentary effects. The actress Mary Steenburgen reads passages from the letters; several stories are animated, with an eye to O’Connor’s adage that “to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.” There’s a clip from John Huston’s 1979 film of her singular first novel, “Wise Blood,” which she wrote at Yaddo and in Connecticut before the onset of lupus forced her to return home. Erik Langkjaer, a publishing sales rep O’Connor fell in love with, describes their drives in the country. Alice Walker tells of living “across the way” from the farmhouse during her teens, not knowing that a writer lived there: “It was one of my brothers who took milk from her place to the creamery in town. When we drove into Milledgeville, the cows that we saw on the hillside going into town would have been the cows of the O’Connors.”

In May, 1955, O’Connor went to New York to promote her story collection, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” on TV. The rare footage of O’Connor lights up the documentary. She sits, very still, in a velvet-trimmed black dress; her accent is strong, her demeanor assured. “I understand you are living on a farm,” the host prompts. “Yes,” she says. “I only live on one, though. I don’t see much of it. I’m a writer, and I farm from the rocking chair.” He asks her if she is a regional writer, and she replies:

I think that to overcome regionalism, you must have a great deal of self-knowledge. I think that to know yourself is to know your region, and that it’s also to know the world, and in a sense, paradoxically, it’s also to be an exile from that world. So that you have a great deal of detachment.

That is a profound and stringent definition of the writer’s calling. It locates the writer’s art in the refinement of her character: the struggle to overcome an outlook that is an obstacle to a greater good, the letting go of the comforts of home. And it recognizes that detachment can leave the writer alone and apart.

At Iowa and in Connecticut, O’Connor had begun to read European fiction and philosophy, and her work, old-time in its particulars, is shot through with contemporary thought: Gabriel Marcel’s Christian existentialism, Martin

Buber's sense of "the eclipse of God." She saw herself as "a Catholic peculiarly possessed of the modern consciousness" and saw the South as "Christ-haunted."

All this can suggest points of similarity with Martin Luther King, Jr., another Georgian who was infused with Continental ideas up north and then returned south to take up a brief, urgent calling. Born four years apart, they grasped the Bible's pertinence to current events, and saw religion as the tie that bound blacks and whites—as in her second novel, "The Violent Bear It Away," from 1960, which opens with a black farmer giving a white preacher a Christian burial. O'Connor and King shared a gift for the convention-upending gesture, as in her story "The Enduring Chill," in which a white man tries to affirm equality with the black workers on his mother's farm by smoking cigarettes with them in the barn.

O'Connor lectured in a dozen states and often went to Atlanta to visit her doctors; she saw plenty of the changing South. That's clear from her 1961 story "Everything That Rises Must Converge." (The title alludes to a thesis advanced by the French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who saw the world as gradually "divinized" by human activity in a kind of upward spiral.) A white man, living at home after college, takes his mother to "reducing class" on a newly integrated city bus. The sight of an African-American woman wearing the same style of hat that his mother is wearing stirs him to reflect on all that joins them. The

sight of a black boy in the woman's company prompts his mother to give the boy a gift: a penny with Lincoln's profile on it. Things get grim after that.

The story was published in "Best American Short Stories" and won an O. Henry Prize in 1963. O'Connor declared that it was all she had to say on "That Issue." It wasn't. In May, 1964, she wrote to her friend Maryat Lee, a playwright who was born in Tennessee, lived in New York, and was ardent for civil rights:

About the Negroes, the kind I don't like is the philosophizing prophesying pontificating kind, the James Baldwin kind. Very ignorant but never silent. Baldwin can tell us what it feels like to be a Negro in Harlem but he tries to tell us everything else too. M.L. King I don't think is the ages great saint but he's at least doing what he can do & has to do. Don't know anything about Ossie Davis except that you like him but you probably like them all. My question is usually would this person be endurable if white. If Baldwin were white nobody would stand him a minute. I prefer Cassius Clay. "If a tiger move into the room with you," says Cassius, "and you leave, that don't mean you hate the tiger. Just means you know you and him can't make out. Too much talk about hate." Cassius is too good for the Moslems.

That passage, published in "The Habit of Being," echoed a remark in a 1959 letter, also to Maryat Lee, who had suggested that Baldwin—his "Letter from the South" had just run in *Partisan Review*—could pay O'Connor a visit while on a subsequent reporting trip. O'Connor demurred:

No I can't see James Baldwin in Georgia. It would cause the greatest trouble and disturbance and disunion. In New York it would be

nice to meet him; here it would not. I observe the traditions of the society I feed on—it's only fair. Might as well expect a mule to fly as me to see James Baldwin in Georgia. I have read one of his stories and it was a good one.

O'Connor-lovers have been downplaying those remarks ever since. But they are not hot-mike moments or loose talk. They were written at the same desk where O'Connor wrote her fiction and are found in the same lode of correspondence that has brought about the rise in her stature. This has put her champions in a bind—upholding her letters as eloquently expressive of her character, but carving out exceptions for the nasty parts.

Last year, Fordham University hosted a symposium on O'Connor and race, supported with a grant from the author's estate. The organizer, Angela Alaimo O'Donnell, edits a series of books on Catholic writers funded by the estate, has compiled a book of devotions drawn from O'Connor's work, and has written a book of poems that "channel the voice" of the author. In a new volume in the series, "Radical Ambivalence: Race in Flannery O'Connor" (Fordham), she takes up Flannery and That Issue. Proposing that O'Connor's work is "race-haunted," she applies techniques from whiteness studies and critical race theory, as well as Toni Morrison's idea of "Africanist 'othering.'" O'Donnell presents a previously unpublished passage on race and engages with scholars who have offered context for the racist remarks. Although she is palpably anguished about O'Connor's race problem, she winds up reprising those earlier arguments in current literary-critical argot, treating O'Connor as "transgressive in her writing about race" but prone to lapses and excesses that stemmed from social forces beyond her control.

The context arguments go like this. O'Connor was a writer of her place and time, and her limitations were those of "the culture that had produced her." Forced by illness to return to Georgia, she was made captive to a "Southern code of manners" that maintained whites' superiority over blacks, but her fiction subjects the code to scrutiny. Although she used racial epithets carelessly in her correspondence, she dealt with race courageously in the fiction, depicting white



characters pitilessly and creating upstanding black characters who “retain an inviolable privacy.” And she was admirably leery of cultural appropriation. “I don’t feel capable of entering the mind of a Negro,” she told an interviewer—a reluctance that Alice Walker lauded in a 1975 essay.

All the contextualizing produces a seesaw effect, as it variously cordons off the author from history, deems her a product of racist history, and proposes that she was as oppressed by that history as anybody else was. It backdates O’Connor as a writer of her time when she was a near-contemporary of writers typically seen as writers of our time: Gabriel García Márquez (born 1927), Maya Angelou (1928), Ursula K. Le Guin (1929), Tom Wolfe (1930), and Derek Walcott (1930), among others. It suggests that white racism in Georgia was all-encompassing and brooked no dissent, even though (as O’Donnell points out) Georgia was then changing more dramatically than at any point before or since. Patronizingly, it proposes that O’Connor, a genius who prized detachment, lacked the free will to think for herself.

Another writer of that cohort is Toni Morrison, who was born in Ohio in 1931 and became a Catholic at the age of twelve. Morrison published “Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination” in 1992. “The fabrication of an Africanist persona” by a white writer, she proposed, “is reflexive: an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly consciousness.” Invoking Morrison, O’Donnell argues that O’Connor’s fiction is fundamentally a working-through of her own racism, and that the offending remarks in the letters “tell us . . . that O’Connor understood evil in the form of racism from the inside, as one who has practiced it.”

The clinching evidence is “Revelation,” drafted in late 1963. This extraordinary story involves Ruby Turpin—a white Southerner in middle age, the owner of a dairy farm—and her encounter in a doctor’s waiting room with a Wellesley-educated young woman, also white, who is so repulsed by Turpin’s condescension toward people there that she cries out, “Go back to hell where

you came from, you old wart hog.” This arouses Turpin to quarrel with God as she surveys a hog pen on her property, and calls forth a magnificent final image of the hereafter in Turpin’s eyes—the people of the rural South heading heavenward. Some say this “vision” redeems the author on That Issue. Brad Gooch, in a 2009 biography, likened it to the dream that Martin Luther King, Jr., spelled out in August, 1963; O’Donnell, drawing on a remark in the letters, de-



picts it as a “vision O’Connor has been wresting from God every day for much of her life.” Seeing it that way is a stretch. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech envisioned blacks and whites holding hands at the end of time; Turpin’s vision, by contrast, is a segregationist’s vision, in which people process to Heaven by race and class, equal but separate, white landowners such as Turpin preceded (the last shall be first) by “bands of black niggers in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs.”

After revising “Revelation” in early 1964, O’Connor wrote several letters to Maryat Lee. Many scholars maintain that their letters (often signed with nicknames) are a comic performance, with Lee playing the over-the-top liberal and O’Connor the dug-in gradualist, but O’Connor’s most significant remarks on race in her letters to Lee are plainly sincere. On May 3, 1964—as Richard Russell, Democrat of Georgia, led a filibuster in the Senate to block the Civil Rights Act—O’Connor set out her position in a passage now published for the first time: “You know, I’m an integrationist by principle & a segregationist by taste anyway. I don’t *like* negroes. They all give me a pain and the more of them I see, the less and less I like them. Particularly the new kind.” Two weeks after that, she told Lee of her aversion to the “philosophizing prophesying pontificating kind.” Ravaged by lupus, she wrote Lee

a note to say that she was checking in to the hospital, signing it “Mrs. Turpin.” She died at home ten weeks later.

Those remarks show a view clearly maintained and growing more intense as time went on. They were objectionable when O’Connor made them. And yet—the argument goes—they’re just remarks, made in chatty letters by an author in extremis. They’re expressive but not representative. Her “public work” (as the scholar Ralph C. Wood calls it) is more complex, and its significance for us lies in its artfully mixed messages, for on race none of us is without sin and in a position to cast a stone.

That argument, however, runs counter to history and to O’Connor’s place in it. It sets up a false equivalence between the “segregationist by taste” and those brutally oppressed by segregation. And it draws a neat line between O’Connor’s fiction and her other writing where race is involved, even though the long effort to move her from the margins to the center has proceeded as if that line weren’t there. Those remarks don’t belong to the past, or to the South, or to literary ephemera. They belong to the author’s body of work; they help show us who she was.

Posterity, in literature, is a strange god—consecrating Dickinson and Melville as American divines, repositioning T. S. Eliot as a man on the run from a Missouri boyhood and a bad marriage. Posterity has favored Flannery O’Connor: the readers of her work today far outnumber those in her lifetime. After her death, the racist passages were stumbling blocks to the next generation’s encounter with her, and it made a kind of sense to sidestep them. Now the reluctance to face them squarely is itself a stumbling block, one that keeps us from approaching her with the seriousness that a great writer deserves.

There’s a way forward, rooted in the work. For twenty years, the director Karin Coonrod has staged dramatic adaptations of O’Connor’s stories. Following a stipulation of the author’s estate, she uses every word: narration, description, dialogue, imagery, and racial epithets. Members of the multiracial cast circulate the full text fluidly from actor to actor, character to character, so that the author’s words, all of them, ring out in her own voice and in other voices, too. ♦

DANCING

SOLO ACTS

Choreography under lockdown.

BY JENNIFER HOMANS



In recent weeks, the vinyl surface known as marley, which covers the floor of many dance studios and stages, has been cut into pieces and shipped around the world to professional dancers exiled to their homes. I have been watching some of these dancers, standing on these outposts of abandoned theatres, in their kitchens and living rooms, as they take their daily ballet class on Zoom, Instagram, YouTube. They are doing it for one another and for themselves: class preserves the body, but above all it tames the mind. It is logical, rigorous; there are rules to be followed, tasks to perform, ideals to achieve. It breaks things down, order-

ing the limbs in repetitive exercises that every dancer knows by heart, like a daily prayer.

Ordinarily, dancers begin class slowly, holding a barre or the back of a chair for support, until they feel their legs, feet, and spine and find their “center”—center of body, of gravity, of mind. As brain and body begin to cohere, dancers move to the center of the studio—space mirroring body—for more expansive movements, like turns and leaps. Class holds a reassuring promise: work hard and you will improve. At its best, it can feel like a purification. As a former dancer, I have never felt my body so lightened, steadied,

and purged of anxiety as I have at the end of class.

Dancers spend their lives digging inside their bodies, searching for hidden reservoirs of emotion. That’s part of what class is about—but it is rarely, as it is now, solitary work. Taken alone, class can become mechanical. An accomplished teacher draws on centuries of knowledge and also on close observation—of mood, aura, carriage, the stubbornness in a joint of the foot, the fear lodged in a knotted muscle—to touch just the right spot to make the dancer’s whole skeleton realign. A hand between the shoulder blades or a finger pressed into a palm can suddenly reveal a secret or unexpected source of expression—“That’s it!”—and everyone present sees the change. You can’t access that kind of revelation by yourself or on Zoom. And, since most kitchens and living rooms are without much of a “center” to move into, many dancers find themselves confined to the barre, holding on, in their most dependent and vulnerable state. Watching their lonely devotion to the basics of their craft—bending the knees or arching the back—we feel their grit and heartbreak. Their class is truncated, a communal rite cut down to a startlingly raw solo form.

Dancers are also performing online. You can watch Misty Copeland and a group of ballerinas dancing Michel Fokine’s elegiac “Dying Swan” in their homes. You can see stars of the Paris Opera Ballet passing steps like footballs, punting from one dancer to the next, kitchen to patio, to Prokofiev’s “Romeo and Juliet.” More fun, the Australian Ballet’s “Wilis in Corps-en-tine (A ‘Giselle’ Skit),” or, more interesting and less sentimental, Mark Morris’s new video dances, choreographed on Zoom. One is titled “Lonely Waltz,” another “Lonely Tango.”

George Balanchine rightly said that watching dance on TV was like reading about a murder in a newspaper—a poor approximation of the terror of the real event. And, for all its offerings, the new online dance world feels cramped and constrained. Dancers are a kind of urban wildlife, and as they crop their bodies to Zoom squares we can almost feel their horizons shrinking. They can, too. Watch a dancer in Valencia, taking out his garbage, break into an ach-

Jamar Roberts designed, performed, and shot “Cooped” alone in a basement.

ing, full-bodied solo for a cheering audience hanging from windows, before bowing back into his quarantine pen. These outpourings are touching, desperate, and, ultimately, a kind of requiem: Remember us!

In New York, dance will not be the same. Much has been lost, but there was a surfeit of bling, especially in the ballet world. Less could really be more. The basic structures—where and how dance is performed—are not all that will be questioned. The virus has already changed our sense of our bodies, which seem suddenly mysterious, weakly defended. Our sense of time, the dancer's tool and trade, has also been jarringly disrupted, but in this, at least, dancers are prepared. Living in the present is part of the training. "What's the matter with now?" Balanchine famously said. "You might be dead tomorrow."

In this moment of collective grief, I am reminded that dance has always been death's close companion, a way of mourning since at least the Middle Ages. During the Black Death, artists depicted the Dance of Death, with skeletons gleefully accompanying rich and poor alike to the grave. In the early nineteenthundreds, as a child in Petrograd, Balanchine lived through war and revolution, suffered from malnutrition, and saw the piles of bodies and mass graves that were populating the city. Few choreographers were more preoccupied with death and grief, or brought a more erotic and heightened sense of life and joy to the stage.

The First World War also produced Mary Wigman, a founder of German Expressionist dance and an influence on early American modern dance. Deeply affected by her work with crippled and traumatized veterans, including her brother, and by her own suffering from tuberculosis, she developed a style of movement that was weighted and contracted from the gut and back. Her solo dances, performed barefoot, had heavy overtones of piety and redemption, with titles such as "Death" and "Sacrifice." Later in the century, anguish over the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki produced its very own dance form in the ashen bodies of Butoh. And the AIDS epidemic gave us, among other works, Bill T. Jones's "D-Man in the Waters."

Today, we have Jamar Roberts. Last

fall, for the Alvin Ailey company, he made "Ode," a dance in response to gun violence. Rather than stricken bodies or the sound of gunfire, it features six elegant black men, bare-chested and wearing simple pants, set against a spray of colorful flowers. Their bodies appear almost ornate, and their movement, to the at times harsh free jazz of Don Pullen's "Suite (Sweet) Malcolm (Part 1: Memories and Gunshots)," from 1975, has a stubborn poise. At the end, five of the dancers fuse together in a kind of human chain, not just hand to hand but body to body—"one long arm," Roberts has called it—and this one long arm lowers a lifeless man to the ground in a heap. As they fade off the stage, he is left there, alone, where he began, beneath the flowers. The dance is not a lament, not the blues, but a more gentle act, a wreath laid on a grave.

At the end of May, in a commission from the Guggenheim's "Works & Process" series, Roberts produced an extraordinary five-minute dance titled "Cooped." He choreographed, designed, directed, performed, and shot (on an iPad) this "fever dream," alone, in a basement, surrounded by shadows that seem to close in on him—an effect ingeniously created by a floor lamp and a flashlight. The tense music was composed, arranged, and performed (remotely) by David Watson (bagpipes) and Tony Buck (drums).

At the opening of the dance, Roberts comes into view seemingly hanging upside down from the ceiling. The image is shocking, but he is glistening and beautiful, swaying as his elbows sweep the floor. His arms cross over his head and he uses them like legs to push off into a suspended state, then he quickly reattaches, insect-like, to another ceiling or surface. In this Kafkaesque space, gravity and weight do not operate in normal ways. Nor does his body. At one point, he shudders inside, quaking to the edge of his human form; at other times he is quieted but weird, his fingers moving anxiously across his torso. By the end, he is some kind of creature in an awkwardly collapsed backbend, supported precariously by the balls of his feet and the crown of his head. As his long arm reaches across his body, his hand grasps his chin and turns his face abruptly from the camera. ♦

YOUR LEGACY

BROUGHT TO LIFE

FAMILY CREST RINGS

Research Included

JOHN-CHRISTIAN.COM

Or call (888) 646-6466



**STRUGGLING
WITH
BORDERLINE
PERSONALITY
DISORDER?**

**OUR PROVEN
CARE CAN HELP**

844.551.6655

mclean.org/bpd

THE
NEW YORKER

**Wear our new
official hat to show
your love.**



100% cotton twill.
Available in white and black.

newyorkerstore.com/hats

REMEMBRANCES

"Da 5 Bloods" and "The King of Staten Island."

BY ANTHONY LANE

A live to the needs of our time, and not content with giving us one film, Spike Lee, as generous as he is scathing, has two new works on release. The first, "3 Brothers," lasts ninety-five seconds and comprises three pieces of footage, skillfully conjoined. Each piece shows the death of an African-American man at the hands of police. Two of the men,

befell them to relax into mere companionship. So frequent are the gestures of togetherness, as the guys bump fists and pledge themselves to unity, that you wonder if they're trying to prove something that they fear no longer holds fast.

We meet them as they gather, in the present day, at a hotel in Ho Chi Minh City. Their notional purpose is to find

the soaring soundtrack, by Terence Blanchard—to the brutally hectic. Lee always likes to give us plenty of movie for our money, and the cornucopia, in this case, is stuffed to bursting point. Some of the stuffing is borrowed: the plot about wartime gold being shared among fellow-grunts is lifted from "Charade" (1963), if you please, starring Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant, while Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," which roared from loudspeakers mounted on helicopters in "Apocalypse Now" (1979), here accompanies the gentle chugging of a riverboat, as the gold hunters embark upon their quest. Eddie rightly scoffs at "those Hollyweird motherfuckers trying to go back and win the Vietnam War," meaning Sylvester Stallone, in the second "Rambo" flick (1985), and the strangely smiling Chuck Norris, in "Missing in Action" (1984). Yet the climax of "Da 5 Bloods," reluctant to shake old habits, pits a bunch of stranded Americans against gun-toting Vietnamese, amid ancient ruins. Looks pretty Hollyweird to me.

So, what else do we have? Tricky parental relations, for one thing: Otis discovers that he has a love child in Vietnam, while Paul is tracked down en route to the treasure by his son, David (Jonathan Majors), who is worried about his old man. Then come the French: the saintly Hedy Bouvier (Mélanie Thierry), who runs an outfit called LAMB, or Love Against Mines and Bombs, and a white-suited sinner named Desroche (Jean Reno), who, to judge by the size of him, must be the chairman of LOUP, or Love of Unregistered Pâtisseries. To be honest, none of these subplots add much to the film's essential force; as in "Miracle at St. Anna" (2008), Lee's tale of African-American troops in Italy, set mostly in 1944, his footing becomes less sure when he strays from familiar ground.

On the other hand, because this is a Spike Lee enterprise, much of it does grip the gaze and summon up the blood. Now and then, the screen narrows; the fringes of the frame close inward like curtains being half drawn, as we turn back in time to the Vietnam War. We see Paul and his buddies in combat fatigues, fully armed, and, to our consternation, we realize that they are still being played by the same aging actors, with the same wrinkles and the same creaky knees. No prosthetics, no C.G.I. The



In Spike Lee's film, four Vietnam veterans search for the remains of a comrade.

Eric Garner and George Floyd, are all too real, and the third, Radio Raheem, is a character in Lee's "Do the Right Thing" (1989). What the mini-movie demonstrates is not so much the coincidence of fact and fiction (each victim has the breath squeezed out of him) as the fulfillment of a prophecy. "I told you so," Lee seems to say, in a rage of regret.

His second new film, "Da 5 Bloods," is a little longer, at more than two and a half hours. It largely tells the story of four men: Paul (Delroy Lindo), Otis (Clarke Peters), Eddie (Norm Lewis), and Melvin (Isiah Whitlock, Jr.). Years ago, they were comrades-in-arms, in the Vietnam War; now, as senior citizens, they are both more and less than friends, too tightly bound by everything that

and to repatriate the remains of their platoon leader, Norman (Chadwick Boseman), the fifth blood of the title, whom they revered, and who was killed in the wake of an encounter with the Vietcong. On the quiet, though, our heroes have an ulterior motive. "Our platoon was ordered to find a C-47 C.I.A. plane that went down with a payroll for the native people," Otis explains. "Uncle Sam was paying them in gold bars, for their help against the VC. Well, we found the gold." It was secreted there, awaiting retrieval at a later date. Thus, the veterans' journey is both an act of homage and a search for buried treasure.

No surprise, perhaps, that the tone of "Da 5 Bloods" should career all over the place, from the solemn—listen to

effect is at once comical and oddly moving, a rebuff to the laborious digital youth that was applied to De Niro and his co-evals in Scorsese's "The Irishman," last year. Lee is suggesting that these folks haven't changed as they once hoped to do—that the shape of their adult existence was somehow formed and fixed by the traumas in Southeast Asia. And by the training, too; when a kid throws firecrackers in the street, in modern-day Ho Chi Minh City, the middle-aged Americans drop to the ground as if dodging tracer bullets.

In short, Lee's new movie—like the great "BlacKkKlansman" (2018)—is a history lesson wrapped in an adventure, the caveat being that history is never done with us, and that we struggle to shrug it off our backs. In the throes of his feature films, Lee is never *not* a documentarian; he doesn't hesitate to interrupt the flow of chatter with a still photograph of Milton L. Olive III, say, who fell on a grenade to save his comrades, in 1965, and was, we hear, "the first brother to be awarded the Medal of Honor in 'Nam." But you don't dishonor a sacrifice by asking what it was for. That's why "Da 5 Bloods" kicks off with a clip of Muhammad Ali, denying that he has any quarrel with the Vietnamese, and moves on to Bobby Seale, from 1968, who declaims, "Here we go, with the damn Vietnam War, and we still ain't gettin' nothin' but racist police brutality, etc."

And there it is, deep in that "etc." There's the link between then and now. Why fight and die for your country, Lee implies, if your country will choke you anyway? When Paul and the gang go for gold, they aren't raiding a lost ark; they are claiming reparation, for centuries of

willful impoverishment. As Norman puts it, in a rousing flashback, "the U.S.A. owe us." It's a hell of an argument, and I wish I could feel it ring out across a crowded movie theatre; mind you, such are the social and political convulsions of recent weeks, in the aftermath of George Floyd's death, in Minneapolis, that it's easy to imagine viewers watching "Da 5 Bloods" online and being swayed, even at home, by the surge of its indignation.

It seems wholly fitting that, where "BlacKkKlansman," a more focussed film, was calmed by the central presence of John David Washington, as an unflappable cop, the core of the new movie should belong to Delroy Lindo, as Paul—wrathful, tearful, and barely in control. He's a Trump voter, in a MAGA cap; he's a mess, who ends up addressing the camera, like the witness to a natural disaster; and he breaks your heart. I won't forget the sight of him as he marches off into the jungle by himself, shouting the Twenty-third Psalm as if issuing a command. "The Lord is my shepherd, I *shall* not want," he cries, biting hard on the final "t." So much for green pastures. He went to war, the poor soul, and never came back.

The weight of the past presses down, in a very different way, on Judd Apatow's "The King of Staten Island." The movie is about the gangling Scott Carlin (Pete Davidson), who is twenty-four, lives with his mother, and has vague plans to be a tattoo artist. His sister, Claire (Maude Apatow), is off to college, leaving Scott to hang out with his errant friends. He has sex with Kelsey (Bel Powley), but any satisfaction is muffled by the antidepressants he takes. "There's

something wrong with me up there," he tells her, indicating his head, and there's no hiding the root of the wrongness: his father, a firefighter, died seventeen years earlier, in heroic circumstances. No wonder Scott looks and behaves like an overgrown kid. His life is in embers.

Fans of "Saturday Night Live," having followed Davidson's rise to fame, will know how closely—indeed alarmingly—he is being used here as a template for Scott. Both have mental-health problems; both have Crohn's disease; and both employ comedy not to deflect from their adversities but to tunnel into them. (One major change: Davidson's father, also a fireman, perished on 9/11.) If you have a taste for this near-reckless candor, and for the snarls of pride with which Scott defends his slackerdom, you will relish this movie, at least in its early phase. The later stages, be warned, contain scenes of emotional uplift, in which Scott gets a dose of male bonding at the local firehouse. He becomes a dogsbod, and learns how to fold the American flag. So *that's* how you cure depression.

By the end, in truth, I found myself swamped by Scott, and wondered if he might have made more impact as a secondary character—maybe as a foil to his widowed mother, Margie, who is played to perfection by Marisa Tomei. Not since Barbara Stanwyck has an actress blended zest and pathos into such expressive chords. Margie, eager to support her son, sports one of his tattoos on her arm. "Is that a cocker spaniel?" she is asked. "No," she replies. "That's my daughter, Claire." ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Richard Brody blogs about movies.

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC. COPYRIGHT ©2020 CONDÉ NAST. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

VOLUME XCVI, NO. 17, June 22, 2020. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for four combined issues: February 17 & 24, June 8 & 15, July 6 & 13, and August 3 & 10) by Condé Nast, a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: Condé Nast, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. Eric Gillin, chief business officer; Piper Goodspeed, head of brand revenue strategy; James Guilfoyle, executive director of finance and business operations; Fabio B. Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast Global: Roger Lynch, chief executive officer; Wolfgang Blau, chief operating officer and president, international; Pamela Drucker Mann, global chief revenue officer and president, U.S. revenue; Anna Wintour, U.S. artistic director and global content advisor; Mike Goss, chief financial officer; Samantha Morgan, chief of staff. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37617, Boone, IA 50037. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37617, Boone, IA 50037, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. If during your subscription term or up to one year after the magazine becomes undeliverable, you are dissatisfied with your subscription, you may receive a full refund on all unmailed issues. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. For advertising inquiries, e-mail adinquiries@condenast.com. For submission guidelines, visit www.newyorker.com. For cover reprints, call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, call (212) 630-5656, or e-mail image_licensing@condenast.com. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenast.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, advise us at P.O. Box 37617, Boone, IA 50037, or call (800) 825-2510.

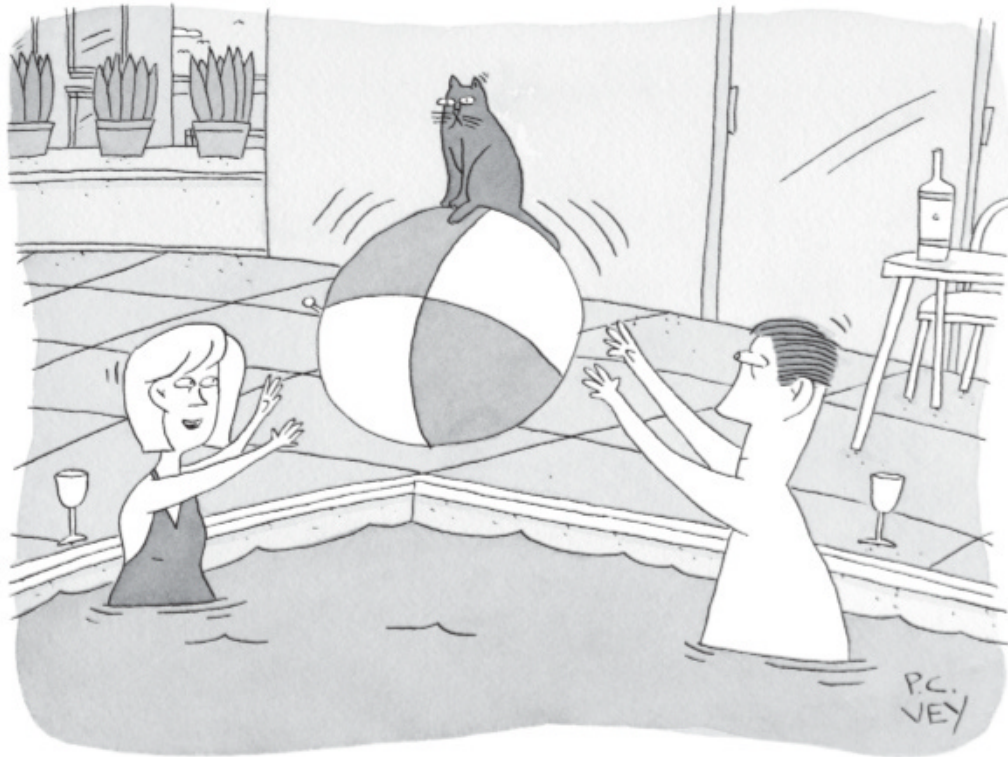
THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING.



CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, June 21st. The finalists in the June 1st contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 6th & 13th issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“

”

THE FINALISTS



“I don't know about you, but I can't wait for this day to end.”
Rosanna Gallen, Berlin, Germany

“One last thing . . .”
Abe Rosenberg, Los Angeles, Calif.

*“Tell me about a time you identified
a problem that others didn't see coming.”*
Scott Smith, Toronto, Ont.

THE WINNING CAPTION



*“I can usually identify a bird by the song,
but I think he's doing a cover.”*
Michael Holmes, Moseley, Va.

ADVERTISEMENT



To all of the health care professionals
and essential workers on the front lines:
thank you.



Where Smart Investors Get Smarter™